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Advertising Sales: Ann Putty. Write or phone for rates card. **Deadline for ads in issue 5 is 4th October, and for issue 6 it's 1st November.**

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Gamesman Magazine: Pegasus Publishing Ltd., Bradford Court, Bradford St., Birmingham, B12 0NS. Tel: 021-766-5555. Fax: 021-766-6302.

Published by: Pegasus Publishing Ltd.© Pegasus Publishing Ltd. 1991 ISSN: 0962 - 9149. Co. Reg. No. 2468226 VAT No. 558 8917 75.

Subscriptions: Full information within on page 71.

Back Issues: UK £2.00 inc. p+p **N.B.** Please make cheques/P.O.'s payable to Pegasus Publishing Limited.

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Thanks To: Joan for all the lifts and sandwiches.

UK Newstand Distribution: Magazine Marketing Company, Octagon House, White Hart Meadows, Ripley, Woking,Surrey,GU23 6RH.

Tel. (0483) 211 222. Fax. (0483) 211 731.

For specialist outlet and overseas distribution queries contact Bob Bladen at Pegasus.

ISSN: 0962 - 9149

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EDITORIAL

Success brings its rewards so you may just notice that we have an extra eight pages this issue. You may also like to know that we have a new associate editor, as Gerard leaves for pastures new Alistair steps in bringing with him considerable experience in both the gaming and publishing fields.

The holiday season is never the best time to try and put a magazine together in, and it's been a difficult month all round, so a very special thank you has to go to Kevin who's spent many a night without sleep getting this mag ready to go to print.

I hope you, the reader, likes the way things have gone so far. We have many more surprises in store for you over the next few issues, one of which is the Pegasus Autumn Competition which starts next issue with the first prize being an all expenses trip for two to see the US premiere of **Aliens III** in Los Angeles. Watch out for the coming expansion to our boardgames section that will cover games from all over the world. We will also soon be printing guidelines to enable you to design games that Gamesman will publish in its centre pages. Keep the letters rolling in; it's the only way by which we can gauge whether what we are doing is right or not. A couple of new columns make an appearance this month, tell us what you think ASAP and we'll know what direction, if any, to take them in.

Thanks for your support and above all **Stay Informed!**

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NEWS

VIDEO RELEASES

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
THE NIGHT OF NO TOMORROW

Released: September 23rd 1991.
Price: £7.99

An amusement park ride turns into a nightmare for six children when they are flung through a gateway in time and space and into the magical realm of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*!

Transformed into Ranger, Barbarian, Acrobat, Magician, Thief and Cavalier, the children are guided in their quest to find a way home by DUNGEON MASTER, a white magician. Each is given a powerful magical weapon with which to fight the battle against VENGER, the very embodiment of evil within the realm.

The video features three full adventures - THE NIGHT OF NO TOMORROW, THE EVE OF THE BEHOLDER and THE HALL OF BONES.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS is the latest addition to Leisureview's range of Marvel Video Comics - which currently includes THE FANTASTIC FOUR, ROBOCOP, SPIDER-MAN, THE INCREDIBLE HULK and X-MEN - and will be available from September 23rd at all major video retailers, including W.H. Smith, 4-Play, H.M.V and Virgin Megastores, priced £7.99.

For more information contact:

LEISUREVIEW VIDEO
5 Churchill Court, 58 Station Road
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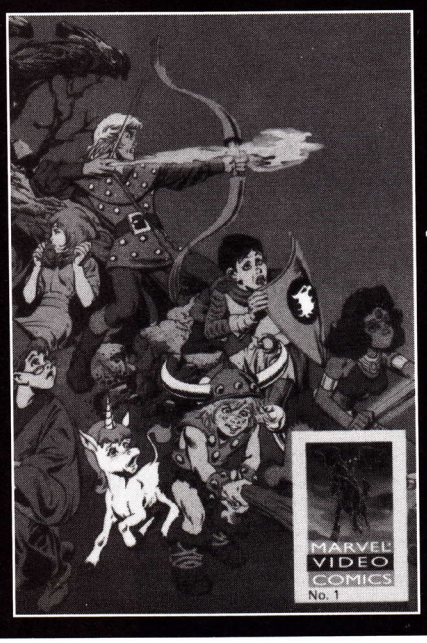

BAR ROOM VAGABONDS

Tales From The Floating Vagabond is a new role-playing game whose only goal is pure fun. The universe presented covers all genres and all realities in an extremely funny way. Because of the open universe, the possibilities of the game are virtually endless.

On the cover its says "Ludicrous adventure in a universe whose natural laws are out to lunch."

The whole game starts when the players (called "Patrons") stumble into an inter-dimensional bar called The Floating Vagabond. Unable to return home, these fugitives from all over time and space have no alternative but to become inter-dimensional adventurers.

This ridiculous premise is supported by a game system that is supposedly a model of simplicity and playability.

Central to the play of the game is the concept of the Schtick, a single special power that almost all Patrons have. An example is the *Flynn* effect that guarantees that the character will always, no matter where he or she is, has something to swing on, be it a rope, vine, chandelier, whatever.

Tales From The Floating Vagabond retails for a suggested list price of $13.95, and is available wherever games are sold. For additional information contact Phyllis Opolko, The Avalon Hill Game Company, 4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD.

FASA, NOVEMBER & BEYOND

October/November

1656, Unbound $8.00

The first adventure written for **MechWarrior** Second Edition brings player characters to the game world of Solaris where they are hired to investigate the mysterious stable called the Deadly Sins, which is fielding 'Mechs of unknown origin'. The characters are drawn into a deadly power struggle over possession of a technological breakthrough that could change the balance of power in the Inner Sphere, and a confrontation with the madman who controls it.

Unbound features weapons variants for **BattleTech** and can be used as an introduction to the **Solaris VII** campaign setting.

5106, Perfect $25.00

Perfect is a **Renegade Legion** boxed game simulating a planetary invasion. Players plan and execute the space and group movements of the campaign. Rules integration with **Levlathan**, **Interceptor** and **Centurion** are provided.

November

1664, Clan Troops $15.00

In **Battle Troops**, players command platoons of infantrymen in battles against enemy soldiers and the unrelenting power of their BattleMechs. The Clans have brought a new enemy to the Inner Sphere, an enemy with advanced weaponry including Elemental armour. **Clan Troops** lets players do battle with the Clan forces in more environments and situations then ever before.

Clan Troops is a boxed supplement to the **Battle Troops** game offering rules expansions for dealing with the new terrain, equipment, and both Inner Sphere and Clan battle armour. Clan Troops also contains 16 scenarios, a variety of full colour counters, and new map-sheets featuring rural settings.

Battle Tech: Falcon Guard (Legend of the Jade Phoenix Vol. 3)
Stock #TBA $3.99

In 2786, the elite Star League Army fled the Inner Sphere, abandoning the senseless bloodshed ordered by the Successor Lords. Now, almost three hundred years later the Clans, heirs of the Star League army, turn their eyes back to their former home. Nothing will stop them from raising the Star League banner over the Earth once more.

For Star Colonel Aidan Pryde of the Clan Jade Falcon the battle is more than a question of military conquest. It is an affirmation of the superiority of the Clan way, a way of life he has sworn to uphold despite his fear that the noble crusade has fallen prey to the lust and ambition of its commanders.

November/December

The Rigger Black Book $15.00 7108

No Shodowrunning team is complete without a rigger. Commanding the vehicles, giving that all-important fire support, surveillance, and a way out if things go bad, a team's rigger is as important as its street samurai or combat mage. And riggers are never found without the vehicles of all types, from urban runabouts to hunter-seeker combat drones, and ample rules for modifying that off-the-dealer's floor vehicle into the lean machine every rigger dreams about.

The Rigger Black Book features dozens of vehicles' support gear, cyberware, and new and expanded vehicle rules in a fully-illustrated sourcebook for the Shadowrun game system. The Rigger Black Book also includes eight pages of full colour illustrations.

INTO THE ION AGE

Alternative Armies, who have spent the last year carving out a reputation for themselves as manufacturers of top quality 25mm fantasy and science fiction miniatures, are within a month of launching a game system dedicated to their miniatures.

Advanced versions of the combat system are already in play-testing with a view to the releasing of a set of skirmish rules in a scenario pack entitled **Firefight**. This simulates futuristic house-to-house operations, and features the free companies mythos AA have been building strongly with their Templars and Crusaders. The same system will also be used to generate other SF and fantasy scenario games, prior to the 1992 launch of the complete game system - with the working title **Ion Age** - in both full boxed set and hard book formats. Computer game tye-ins and other versions of the product are also in the process of being produced.

"The same core system is at the root of the whole game," announces Malcolm 'Mac' Coxhead, founder of AA, "it makes it possible to learn the whole game in about 30 minutes - everything else is a logical extension of the core rules. Roleplaying, battle and skirmish are all covered."

"It's a radically different approach to table-top combat. It's very visual, and provides for semi-simultaneous fire and resolution. That make it play very fast - play-test versions have shown skirmishes taking about 25 minutes from setup. It places a strong emphasis on superior tactics and weapon deployment, and it is very unforgiving of bad play."

There is virtually no comparison with any other game on the market, AA maintain. The **Ion Age** system treats individual combat in roleplay and battle as an exercise in atmoshphere-generation, rather than attempting to simulate "reality'. "What's the point of having a hyper-realistic simulation which you then 'fudge' in order to keep the hero alive?' In **Ion Age** you're responsible for more than one person - a group of heroes, centred around your most important roleplay character. Death, therefore, is common place. "You won't believe how much **Urban Firefight** feels like a brutal street battle," promised Mac, "...and yet the record keeping is minimal. Skill systems and all kinds of situational modifiers are built in, and yet they don't require dozens of tables. I think there are about three in the entire rule system so far..."

Firefight was previewed at GenCon in the USA at the beginning of August. The response was extremely promising, and it has firmly placed AA at the head of the new wave of British manufacturers operating in the USA. "We may not be in the first division yet, but when the Super League comes - we'll be there!".

Firefight is scheduled for release in September this year, for less than £10.00.

TKON VI

Are you boldly going to TKON VI, the mini Star Trek convention, to be held at the Novatel Hotel, Coventry 18th - 20th October 1991? Ticket rates are £22.00 for single rooms and £19.00 for all others, the registration fee is £10.00. For further information contact Sue Whiffin, 12 Marlow Road, Hurley, Nr.Atherstone, Warks. CU9 2NG.

Anyone with news related to the games industry, in whatever form should address it to:

Gamesman " News "
Pegasus Publishing
Bradford Court
Bradford Street
Birmingham
B12 0NS.

ON THE GRAPE VINE

Leading Edge, producers of **Aliens**, now have their Aliens RPG in the shops. Word is also out that there may be a **Predator** RPG in the works too...

Virgin have opened a new store in Guildford, Surrey. Complete with games it should make a welcome addition to the game starved south.

Chaosium are releasing *Kingsport* as an addition to their successful *Lovecraft Country* range of *Call of Cthulhu* source books which have already covered Arkham and Dunwich; expect *Escape from Innsmouth* in the near future. **Pendragon** fans can also expect another two suppliments in the coming months including the *Cambrian Adventures*.

Iron Crown Enterprises have begun an enigmatic advertising campaign for *Dreamtime* "a new concept in roleplaying". More on this soon...

Fans take note. *Rifts; England* is in the works and will be covering most of Europe, no release schedule as yet. Plus **Paladium** fantasy gamers can expect to see *Island on the Edge of the World* very soon, which guarantees to take adventurers somewhere they've never gone before...

Last but not least, R. Talsorian games are producing a follow up to *EuroTour 21* where PC's will be playing muscle and hired help for a *Rockerboy's* tour of East and West Europe.

FANTASY FACTORY THUNDERS ON

Birmingham's newest professional LRP group *Fantasy Factory* has announced that its first adventures for the public will start on the 5th and 6th of October at Cannock Chase. Four, 4 hour adventures will be run over the two days and the cost for each adventure will be £12.00 per person. *Fantasy Factory* have a catalogue and a full rang of costumes and weapons available from October. Anyone interested in the adventures should contact: *Fantasy Factory*, Unit 6, 272 Montgomery Street, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B11 1 DS. Tel: 021 772 5130.

HOBBY TOP TWENTY - HIGHLY RECOMMENDED GAMES

1	Basic D&D (New Box)	TSR
2	Aliens Adventure (RPG)	Leading Edge
3	Runequest Deluxe (Promo)	Avalon Hill
4	Tome of Magic (AD&D)	TSR
5	Dark Conspiracy	GDW
6	Nautical Aviation (Twilight 2000)	GDW
7	MechWarrior Rulebook	FASA
8	Toon Deluxe	Steve Jackson
9	Minas Ithil	ICE
10	Orosh (Torg)	West End
11	SFB New Worlds	Taskforce
12	2nd Edition Players Handbook	TSR
13	Vampire Kingdoms (Rifts)	Paladium
14	BattleTech	FASA
15	Chicago Arcology (Cyberspace)	ICE
16	Cyberpunk	Talsorian
17	Rolemaster	ICE
18	Call of Cthulhu	Chaosium
19	2nd Edition DMG	TSR
20	Vampire	Lion Rampant

PALADIN

Oops! Sorry to Paladin for the mistake in last issue's news column. The next meeting will actually take place at **The Portly Pixie** site on Whitley Common on Friday, October 4th, and not at the Coniston Road address as stated. Our apologies are given for any inconvenience caused.

SIGMA, 15 YEARS ON.

SIGMA, The Society of Inventors of Games and Mathematical Attractions, celebrates it's fifteenth anniversary later this year. Apart from SIGMA's advice and assistance to inventors, the SIGMA Games Club has a unique forum available for anyone wishing to play/discuss/test games. A large stock of games include the best strategy boardgames from all over the world. Occasional tutorials are given by game manufacturers and among the games play-tested there include *Save the President!* and *In the Money*. Visitors are always welcome - bring games if you want - and game rules are quickly explained. The club meets every 2nd, 4th and 5th Sunday (where there are 5 weeks in a month) from 3pm to midnight at: IVC, 3 The Piazza, Covent Garden, London WC2 (entrance through Cubit's yard). Admission £2.00. For more information contact Jack Jaffe on 081 445 7787.

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ICE COMING IN

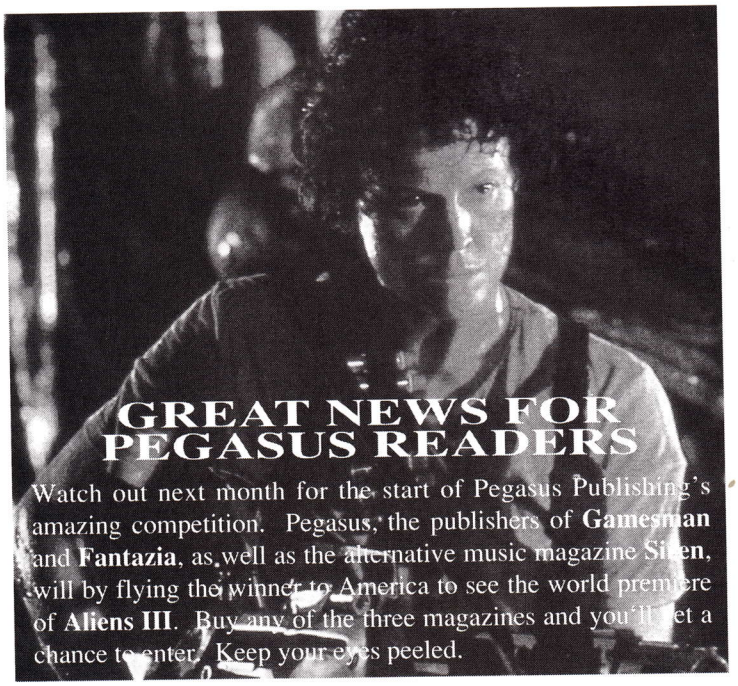
October releases for ICE, excluding the CyberHERO sourcebook covered in last issue's news column, include:

LR0, Lord of the Rings Adventure Game, one of the Middle Earth sub- series, should retail at around $18.00. ISBN 1-55806-124-X.

LR1&2 Lord of the Rings Adventures 1 & 2, again for the Middle Earth sub-series, retailing at $7.00 each. ISBN's: **LR1** - 1-55806-150-9, **LR2** - 1-55806-151-7.

1520, Spell User's Companion, a Rolemaster sourcebook, should retail at around $16.00. ISBN - 1-55806-149-5

For more information contact: ICE, P.O. Box 1605, Charlottsville, Va.,22902, USA. Telephone: 0101 804 295 4280.



GREAT NEWS FOR PEGASUS READERS

Watch out next month for the start of Pegasus Publishing's amazing competition. Pegasus, the publishers of **Gamesman** and **Fantazia**, as well as the alternative music magazine **Sirren**, will by flying the winner to America to see the world premiere of **Aliens III**. Buy any of the three magazines and you'll get a chance to enter. Keep your eyes peeled.

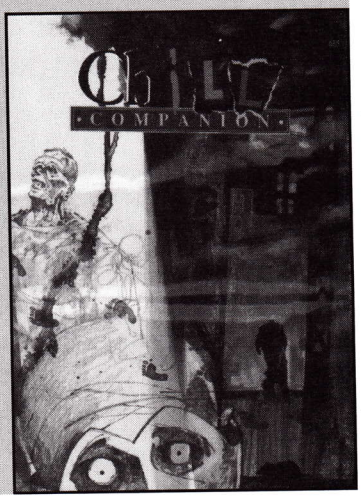
CHILL OUT DUDES

Chill out and check out the cover of Mayfair's **Chill Companion**, with its Joe De Velasco artwork, the 160 page hard cover, for use with **Chill**, *The Horror Roleplaying Game*.

The **Chill Companion** is meant to be the ultimate reference work on the horror genre, examining everything from the Gothic novel to the mad slasher films of today, and explains how to incorporate these sub-genres of fiction and film into any horror roleplaying campaign or scenario.

The Chill rules are also expanded, ensuring that gamesmasters get the big picture on developing their own magic systems and enacting chase scenes and interactive scenes between characters and creatures. Statistics for infamous characters such as Quasimodo, Dr.Victor Frankenstein, Dr.Van Helsig, Dr.Henry Jekyll and Mr.Edward Hyde are also included.

Product #655, should retail at around $17.00 (approx. £10.00). Expect CyberChill in the not too distant future...



BELTING WITH TSR

TSR continue their mammoth run of releases and here, for TSR fans, are just a few of them:

NOVEMBER

25CR5, THE BELT

Another in the series of game sourcebooks for use with the **Buck Rogers** game. This accessory details the asteroid belt, Bottles and the trans-Saturnian asteroid, Chiron. Hidden in the tumbling rocks of the asteroid belt is a secret that entire planets would be sacrificed for - and you must uncover this mystery first! Should retail at around £6.50 ($9.95). Product #: 3579. ISBN - 1-56076-096-6.

FMA1, ENDLESS ARMIES

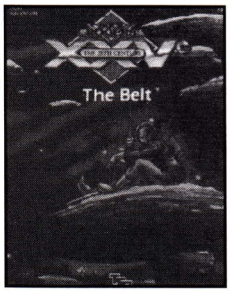
This is the second adventure set in the land of Maztica. A plague of giant army ants threatens to annihilate the jungle kingdom of Payit. Can the party delay the army long enough to break the magical force that impels them? Includes **Battlesystem** rules and scenarios for use in the New World as well as roleplaying adventures. Should retail at around £4.50 ($6.95). Product #: 9340. ISBN - 1-56076-146-1.

RA3, TOUCH OF DEATH

In this **Ravenloft** episode, the Gypsies have acquired an ancient mummy. They use it as a sideshow attraction, but the mummy has plans of its own. Should retail at about £4.50 ($6.95). Product #: 9338. ISBN - 1-56076-144-X.

PHBR6, COMPLETE DWARVES HANDBOOK

This 128 page accessory for use with **AD&D 2nd edition** presents everything players want to know about Dwarves and their way of life. It includes new magic, cultural details and abilities of Dwarves of all types. Should retail at around £9.99 ($15.00). Product #: 2124. ISBN - 1-56076-110-5.



PLASTIC BLISTERS

Grenadier announce that the many people who have requested that *Fantasy Warriors* plastic miniatures should be made available in blister packs will be pleased to know that six such packs are going to be released. These will be:

Dwarves with spears, Dwarves with axes, Dwarves with crossbows, Orcs with spears, Orcs with scimitars and *Orc Archers*. There will be twenty identical figures in each pack that will retail at £5.25

New metal releases are, as usual, many and varied. In blister packs are a host of *Fantasy* goodies from Bob Nailsmith including 5 packs of *Goblin spider riders* (warrior, hero, wizard, leader and gunner). Three packs of *Hobgoblins*, 4 packs of *Horse raiders* and an *Undead flyer*. Mark Copplestone also has some *Fantasy Warriors* blister packs out - *Barbarian Giant, High Elves with two handed weapons* and *Barbarian Heroes*. Julie Guthrie's new single figure blister range continues to expand. Latest releases are *Female Bard, Fighting Cleric, Elven Ranger, Dark Wizard, Armoured Warrior, Royal Paladin, Evil Archer, Dwarf with Crossbow, Rogue Adventurer* and *Wood Elf*.

Bob and Mark's *Fantasy Warriors* packs are £2.95 each, Julie Guthrie's Personality packs are 90p each.

There's also a new special edition boxed set out from William Watt. *2534 Huge Black Dragon* is another stunning piece from a designer who specialises in these impressive large creatures. Price is £17.95

For further information contact **Grenadier Models UK Ltd.** 25-27 Babbage Road, Deeside, Clwyd, CH5 2QB. Telephone 0244 536135.

If you didn't, it's essential.

On the other hand, if your GCSE results weren't so good, you're probably wondering what to do next. In which case, have you thought of BTEC? You don't usually need exam passes to do a BTEC First and the courses combine learning with real work experience, which is why over 90% of BTEC students get jobs after leaving. BTEC Firsts are available at hundreds of colleges throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For more information, post the coupon or ring this number now.

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LEARNING A LIVING

BOARD AND STRATEGY GAMES GOSSIP

Steve Nichols' Games Gossip takes a further look into the releases of the more 'minor' games (only occasionally seen in those specialist shops). Read on ...

GENERAL NEWS

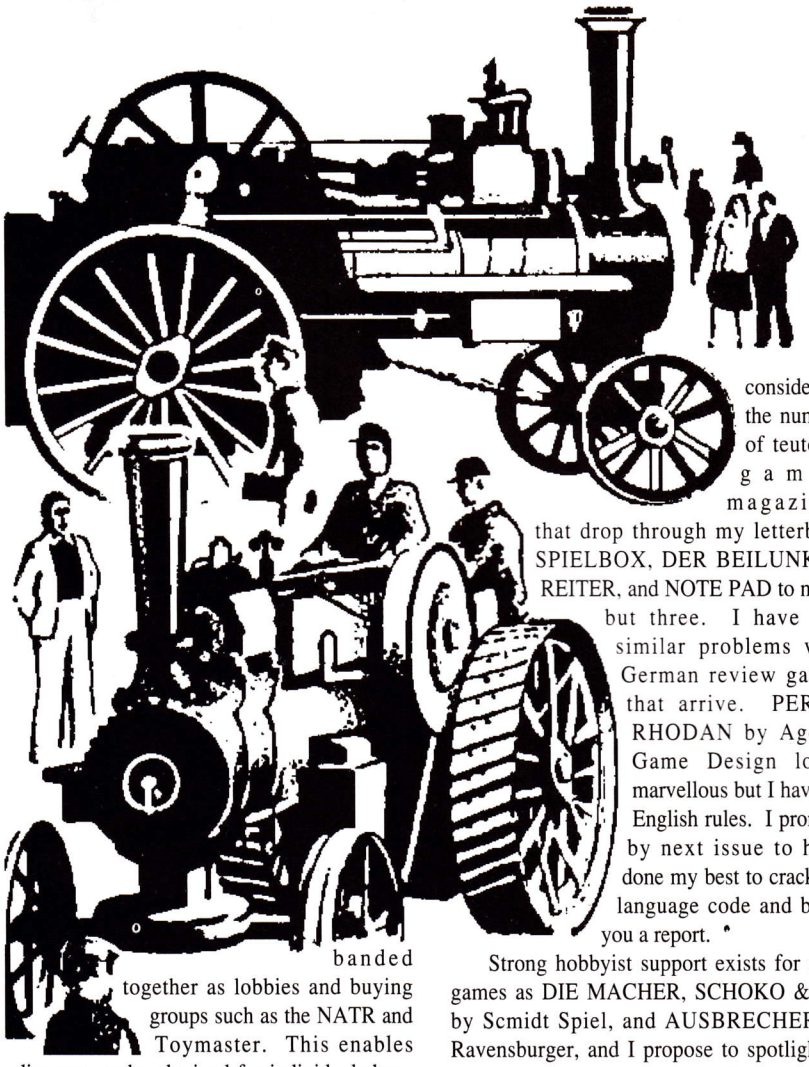
I can now confirm that the MIND GAMES / Novotel event will not be taking place this year. Although the event was well organised and enjoyable, perhaps it suffered from being too ambitious in scope. The absence of major-label exhibitors (with the honourable exception of RAVENSBURGER UK) did not help. What a stark contrast there has been between London consumer game shows at the German equivalent at Essen!

One of the reasons for the success of the German event has been support from the town itself. In the last month, together with Mark Green and Neville from JUST GAMES shop (off Piccadilly) we have sounded out the feasibility of organising a new consumer Games Show in time for early December 1991. Neville was one of the organisers for the recent 'Pavarotti in the Park' event, and his approach to Westminster Council has thrown up a couple of venues.

However, time is now short and it would be useful to hear from any firms who would be interested in exhibiting at a JUST GAMES show, provisionally over the weekend of 7th / 8th December, or alternatively, from anybody with any practical ideas that could help us to stage an event that could benefit the whole industry. Please contact either Mark Green at JUST GAMES, 71 Brewer Street, Tel. (071) 734 6124, or myself (address elsewhere on this page).

I have heard from David Watts of ROSTHERNE GAMES (inventor of RAILWAY RIVALS), who is exhibiting at Essen this year. David reports that his games have been selling record amounts at conventions, but that postal trade and shop sales are down. David has been around for yonks and is one of the most helpful people in the board games firmament. Once again he offers his useful free GUIDE TO ESSEN in return for an SSAE. Address: ROSTHERNE, 102 Priory Road, Milford Haven, Dyfed, SA73 2ED.

Another point raised by David concerned the feasibility of the proposed 'Association of Independent Games Publishers', since no trade body exists to look after the interests of the smaller games firms. Toy retailers have banded together as lobbies and buying groups such as the NATR and Toymaster. This enables discounts to be obtained for individual shops by central bulk purchasing.



My thoughts are that single product games companies would be better advised to share some marketing and distribution functions. It costs little more to print a colour catalogue of 20 games than it does to print a leaflet for one game, and the multiples and larger retailers look more favourably on a supplier with a range of games for them to "cherry pick", than on the one-man-game band that is an unknown quantity and a paperwork headache. If you visit the start-up games companies along 'death row' at Earl's Court, you will be struck by the fact that they see each other as 'the competition', whereas in truth, the wandering Buyers whose eye they try desperately to attract, are largely the reason why small games firms fail to survive, no matter what the strength of the game or how original the concept.

My efforts to learn German are lamentably slow, and I am tempted to purchase one of those language-translating voice calculators advertised in Observer supplements, particularly considering the number of teutonic games magazines that drop through my letterbox: SPIELBOX, DER BEILUNKER REITER, and NOTE PAD to name but three. I have had similar problems with German review games that arrive. PERRY RHODAN by Agema Game Design looks marvellous but I have no English rules. I promise by next issue to have done my best to crack the language code and bring you a report.

Strong hobbyist support exists for such games as DIE MACHER, SCHOKO & CO by Scmidt Spiel, and AUSBRECHER by Ravensburger, and I propose to spotlight at least one 'import board game' for you every issue now that 1992 is almost upon us.

GAMES

KREMLIN . . . Avalon Hill.
Price circa £16

Gamesman 2) Andrew Bryceson, William Maclean Ltd, 071 731 3358.

RAVE (update ... special one hour RAVEMIX tape free with first 2,000 sets!) Sophia or Patrick, WOW Enterprises, 071 402 4248.

CLOAK & DAGGER, David Hooker, Eye Spy, 0202 429136.

SHRINK (& FREUD the game), Bunny Dexter, 071 581 0196.

ANYTHING TO DECLARE (customs and smuggling game), Les Raithby, 0472 241741.

TOUCHDOWN ZONE (American Football strategy), Double G Games, PO Box 1003, Canvey Island, Essex.

British SHOGI Federation and Newsletter, Vincent West, 31 Simons Close, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks RG3 6GA.

SHOGI and ENOCHIAN CHESS (Gamesman issues 2 and 3) Aztral Games, c/o Steve Nichols, 172 Normanston Drive, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 2PP (0502 518625). This is also the address for any review board or strategy games or items of news to be sent for inclusion in GAMES GOSSIP. ♠

One game that was originated by a Swiss named Urs Hostettler and was an instant hit on the continent under the label Fatimah Morgana Spiel, later to be purchased, adapted, and launched in the English-speaking world by Avalon Hill, is the topical KREMLIN. In the light of the recent bout of 'Russian Flu' following Gorby's kidnapping and Yeltsin's stand against the putsch, some of the machinations in this excellent game seem appropriate to re-visit.

In the game, three to six players each represent a political pressure group. There are 26 politicians, represented by cards, with an elderly and ill Party Chief as supremo, followed by a powerful triumvirate of KGB Chief, Foreign Minister, and Military Commander. Various other more junior politicians together with these four are distributed randomly on the board.

Players use influence points to affect the careers of various politicians, which may either be declared or kept secret. Each turn represents a year, during which time a sick Politburo member can either sit it out in Gorki trying to get well but becoming politically inactive (and worse still being shunted to Siberia), or staying in his post and running the risk of death by a combination of stress and great age.

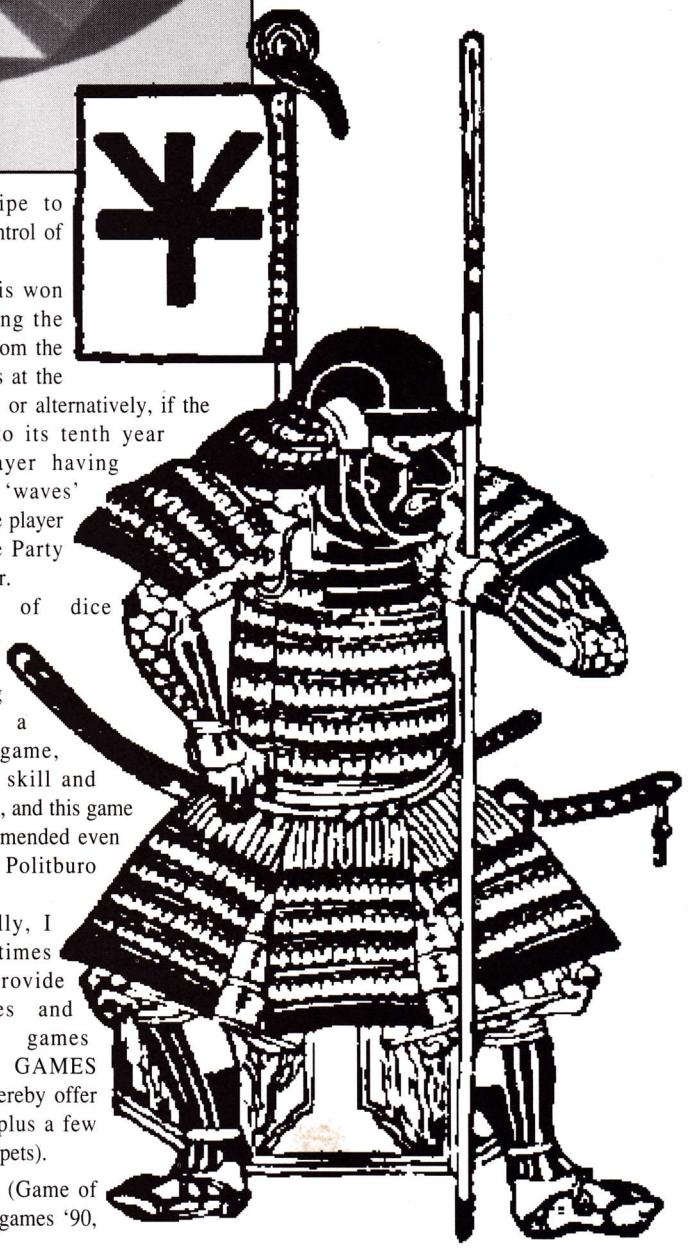
Purges, foreign spies, and even elections take place during the game, and politicians are able to award political advancement to cronies (and demotion to their enemies in the case of the Chief). Each player is continually involved in the game, and must decide when the time is ripe to declare their control of a politician.

The game is won either by getting the most 'waves' from the Politburo Chiefs at the October Parade, or alternatively, if the game goes into its tenth year without a player having achieved three 'waves' the winner is the player controlling the Party Chief in that year.

Throwing of dice prevents KREMLIN from being considered as a pure strategy game, but a level of skill and guile is essential, and this game is highly recommended even if the real-life Politburo ceases to exist.

Finally, I have sometimes neglected to provide contact names and numbers for games mentioned in GAMES GOSSIP, and hereby offer some redress (plus a few extra useful snippets).

ARTICULATE (Game of the show, Mindgames '90,



COMPUTER NEWS

The 1991 European Computer Entertainment Show was a very successful exhibition. Even though it was trade only, the attendance of the major companies was not as near to 100% as in previous years. Never the less, the exhibitors did surpass themselves. The most noteable stands being those belonging to Virgin and Ocean with their hot new releases *Terminator II, RoboCop 3* and *WWF* games.

The companies, on the whole, were very impressed with Gamesman, and valued the purpose of the magazine, to reach you, our receptive and open minded readers.

The show was conducted at two main sites - Earls Court II and the Gloucester Hotel, the latter being for the major companies like Entertainment International, Electronic Zoo, Electronic Arts, Gremlin Graphics, Psygnosis and last but not least US Gold.

Now lets get down to the nitty-gritty; who is releasing what and when, looking at the roleplaying aspect first.

Many of the companies are releasing roleplaying computer software on a variety of formats. Autumn 1991 (October) will see the release of Accolade's **Elvira II**: **The Jaws of Cerberus**, available for the IBM PC, Tandy & Compatibles and Amiga. The roleplaying sequel to **Elvira**: **Mistress of the Dark** it has been developed by Horrorsoft in the tradition of its predecessor, however, it will be over five times larger than **Elvira I**, with nearly 4,000 locations in which to live, move and die. It promises over 120 hours of gameplay, hundreds of creatures to battle and more than 700 weapons, herbs and scrolls to find and use. The game is completely icon driven with 256 colour VGA graphics and supporting AdLib, Roland MT-32/LAPC-1 Soundblaster soundboards.

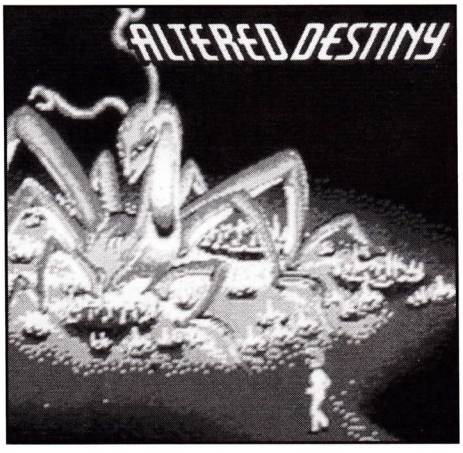
Elvira II

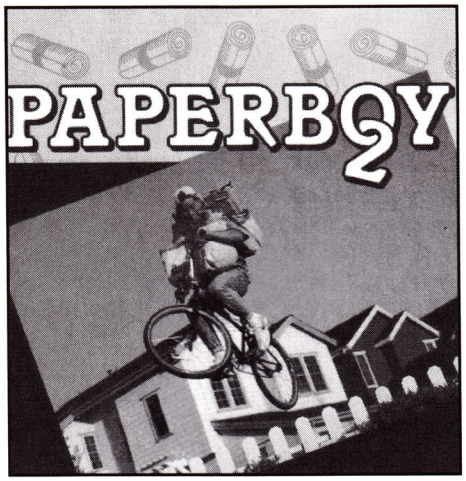
Mindscape have a plethora of roleplaying adventures ready to hit your screens in the next few months. September sees **Knightmare** up and running on the Amiga and the ST, based on Anglia TV's award winning TV series, and using the same game system that made **Captive** adventure game of the year for 1990. It gives you the chance to control a host of characters in this mystical adventure that allows you to choose one of four quests and mixes roleplaying with straight Knight and Dragonslaying to produce a game that is meant to be uncannily like the original. For the Amiga,**Ultima VI**, **The False Prophet** is due out in October published by Origin and continuing the award winning series. As the Avatar you find yourself in the clutches of horrifying Gargoyles that are fighting to save their race and right an ancient wrong. In **Ultima VI** things are not always what they appear to be, and evil is not so easily defined. Closely following it in November will be **Ultima VII, The Black Gate**. Britannia is plagued by a number of stigmas and the once reliable Moongates are malfunctioning. After receiving a mysterious but threatening message from another dimension it is up to you to discover who, or what, is behind it all.

Ultima VI, The False Prophet

US Gold will be releasing **Eye of the Beholder II** for the IBM in November, Amiga 1 meg version follows in January, and many improvements on the original will be seen in the sequel, such as new locations, an expanded storyline with more character interaction, more variety in the creatures and characters to encounter, smarter monsters that are better in combat and interact with their surroundings, higher level characters, more spells and new monsters - price to be announced. September is set aside for **Robin Hood**, a game that US Gold say will turn the world of real time adventuring on its head. The programme apparently allows numerous individual characters to go about their business with or without the player's intervention. All the characters who have made this story a legend down the centuries are incorporated in this massive real time adventure. Available on IBM PC and compatibles in September for £30.99, Amiga and ST versions available in October at £25.99. Red hot action can also be obtained if you get the special collectors edition that contains three **AD&D** action games: **Heroes of the Lance**, based on the *Dragonlance* module *Dragons of Despair*, in which you lead eight heroes into the ruins of an ancient temple to retrieve the precious Disks of Mishakal; **Hillsfair,** combining the best of roleplaying adventures with fast paced action, transfers characters from the *Pool of Radiance* or *Curse of the Azure Bonds* if you do not want to create them from scratch; finally **Dragons of Flame**, based on the game module of the same name. The compilation will be released on the IBM, 5.25" and 3.50", ST, Amiga and C64 Disc for September at a cost of £34.99 for the IBM, £30.99 for the ST and Amiga and £27.99 for the C64.

Away from the roleplaying front the games world is literally teaming with new releases ready to hit the stands prior to the run up to Christmas. Accolade again figure highly with **Mike Ditka Ultimate Football**, an American Football simulation that is the first to concentrate on viewing and playing angles. In terms of gameplay it also offers three game modes: coach only, play only or both. Available from September on the PC it will retail at £34.99. Accolade also offers **Altered Destiny** in the same month for the Amiga, IBM PC, Tandy & Compatibles for £29.99. This game introduces players to modern day hero P.J. Barrett who finds himself sucked though his television set into a strange and troubled world. Here he meets JonQuah who tells the hesitant hero that he must find

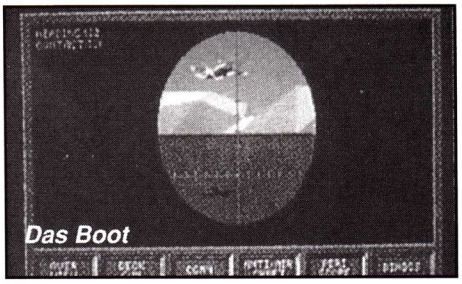




JonQuah's twin brother who has been corrupted by a jewel whose powers are slowly destroying their universe. He must search this strange world to find Helmar, separate him from the jewel and return it to its rightful place before this world ceases to exist, trapping him there.

Mindscape are offering **Paperboy II** in November. Yes, just when you thought it was safe to ride back down Acacia Avenue a whole host of your favourite enemies and a lot of new ones are waiting to pounce on you in this enhancement of arcade-lands most popular bike ride. **Paperboy II** delivers (ha! ha!) better graphics, three way scrolling and a new soundtrack that makes it far better than the original. In this sequel you can even select a paperboy or a papergirl. Available for IBM PC and 100% compatibles, Amiga, Amstrad, C64 and Spectrum, it should also be available soon for NES and Gameboy. Mindscape will also double dare you with **Blue Max**, **Aces of the Great War**,

WWI Air Combat Simulation and **Das Boot**, German U-boat simulation. Both offer 3D colour graphics, and missions to choose from. **Blue Max** allows action dog-fighting for one or two players using one keyboard, with eight planes to choose from, each with their own detailed flying characteristics. **Das Boot** is set in 1941 beneath the icy waters of the North Atlantic. You have to deal with threats above and below the surface and send and receive coded information using the German Enigma Coding Machine. The game has three levels of difficulty from beginner to realistic. Both will be available for the IBM PC (dual) in November for £35.76, the Amiga version will be out in December at £30.64 and for the ST in January also at £30.64.



Elite have come out with a whole lot of goodies for many formats. Just released for the C64 is **Last Battle**, currently enjoying success on the Sega Megadrive; Elite have transferred it to home computers. It is a "Ninja" style beat-em-up in which the characters are large and well animated. Game play is fast, challenging and requires an element of planning and strategy to complete and is set after a great war has devastated the land and a nefarious power has taken over. The mighty Aarzak and his two companions have banded together to reclaim their homeland. Using the secret martial art of Jet Kwon Do, Aarzak must defeat his foe or suffer the consquences. Out now on C64, Amiga, St with PC available in October. NES players are in for a treat in October as Elite bring **Dragon's Lair** to the Nintendo. A popular arcade and computer game, it should prove a hit with console buffs as they follow the quest of *Dirk the Daring* to rescue *Princess Daphne* from the clutches of *Singe the Dragon.* The Gameboy version should be available for January 1992. Another October release from Elite is **Movie Premiere**. Available on most major formats, this compilation includes four games, **Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles, Gremlins II, Back to the Future Part II** and **Days of Thunder** and should prove to be a hit for Christmas.

Domark have a super collection ready for Christmas; September sees **Mig-29 SuperFulcrum.** Based on the original **Mig-29** it offers a better aircraft and concentrates on making you an integral part of a large scale war. The game also lets you link two computers so that you can fight head to head against friends in thrilling dog-fights. Available on IBM PC 5.25" and 3.5" at £44.99, Amiga £39.99, ST £39.99 and Archimedes (October release) £44.99. October releases include **Rugby - The World Cup**, this game is to Rugby what *Kickabout* is to Football, allowing up to sixteen people to play on a knockout basis against each other or the computer. Available for Amiga and ST £24.99, C64 Cassette £10.99 and disc £14.99. **Super Space Invaders - The sequel with no equal!** also makes an appearance with level after level of increasingly weird and hostile invaders, end of level mega guardians and wacky bovine bonus levels. Available on IBM PC £29.99, Amiga and ST £24.99, Spectrum Cass. £9.99, Amstrad Disc £17.99 and Cass. £10.99, C64 Disc £14.99 and Cass. £10.99. **Superheroes** is a compilation of good 'ol super guys, four games in one including **The Spy Who Loved Me, Last Ninja II, Indiana Jones - The Last Crusade** and **Robocop**. Formats include Amiga and ST for £29.99, C64 and Amstrad disc for £19.99, C64, Amstrad and Spectrum Cass. £14.99. Along with **Superheroes** we also have the ***James Bond Collection*** featuring **The Spy Who Loved Me, Live and Let Die and Licence to Kill**. Available on Amiga and ST £24.99, C64 and Amstrad disc £19.99, C64, Amstrad and Spectrum Cass. £12.99.

Well folks that's all for this month, keep your eyes peeled and, **Stay Informed!** ♠

Computer Games Top Twenty

1. THUNDERHAWK - Amiga, Core, Flight Sim.
2. S. WEAPS LUFTWAFFE - IBM, Lucus, Flight Sim.
3. CASTLES - IBM, Interplay, Strategy.
4. GATEWAY/FRONTIER - IBM, SSI, FRPG.
5. F15 STRIKE EAGLE - Amiga/ST, Microprose, Sim.
6. VIRTUAL REALITY 1 - IBM, Elite, Compilation.
7. CRUISE FOR A CORPSE - Amiga, Delphine, Mystery.
8. MONKEY ISLAND - Amiga/ST/IBM, Lucas, Adv
9. MIDWINTER 2 - ST, Microprose, Statergy.
10. SECRET SILVER BLADE - IBM/AMIGA, SSI, FRPG.
11. LIFE & DEATH - IBM/ST, Mindscape, Sim
12. MEGA TRVELLER - IBM, Empire, SFRPG
13. FLIGHT O.T. INTRUDER - IBM/ST, Mirrorsoft, Flt Sim
14. BRIGADE COMMANDER - Amiga, EL.200, Wargame.
15. DEATH K'GHT O KRYNN - Amiga, SSI, FRPG
16. SIMCITY/POPULOUS - IBM/ST, Infogramme, Sim
17. RAILROAD TYCOON - IBM/ST, Microprose, Strat.
18. HEART OF CHINA - IBM, Sierra, Adventure.
19. HEROQUEST - Amiga/ST, Grmlin, Adv.
20. JETFIGHTER 2 - IBM, Velocity, Flight Sim.

Compiled by

Virgin

LIVE ROLE PLAY

Live Roleplay has never been as active in this country as it is today...So just when you thought it was safe to go back into the dungeon we hit you with another column in which Lizi Graham presents all of the latest news and gossip in the LRP field. Stay informed!

Poseurs at Huntin part.

FORGE RINGS THE CHANGES

The Devon LRP company, known interchangeably as Forge of Lein, Creative Madness or Dumnonni, has undergone further convolutions of late, resulting in the creation of four distinct companies. Dave Oliver has now taken hold of the reins of both Forge of Lein - LRP weapons & props, and Dumnonni Chronicles - LRP adventures. He is aided and abetted by Denise Gatley and Chris Jones and this new team can be found at:
Woodlands, Exbourne, Nr. Oakhampton, N.Devon. Tel-0837 85486.
Dave's intention is to run quality adventures every 4-6 weeks, designed around the players requirements for the scenario. The Chronicles' rules will remain the same as ever, but more attention will be paid to props and settings to make the adventures as near a total immersion experience as possible.
Creative Madness, run jointly by Gail MacIntosh and Kerys Woodcock, is branching out further into the world of drama and LRP workshops, but will be adding more theatrical projects to their extensive repertoire. Kerys, loath to lay his considerable latex sculpting skills to rest, will be operating a special weapon commission service, under the name of Swordmaster Tarn. Kerys will set his mind and hands to the creation of literally anything - from swords to demons, from corpses to dragons - the only limit is on size. At present he can only manufacture props less than 12ft high and 25ft long. Even these dimensions are only made possible by Creative Madness's move to new premises based in an old village school-house, allowing "much more space for creating" according to Kerys. The Swordmaster and Creative Madness can both be contacted at: 2, Castle Street, Winkleigh, N.Devon, EX19 8HU. Tel- 0837 83781.

Andi Coulton playing Wolverine at Covergence.

Young Players Welcome at Labyrinthe.

Filling gaps in the LRP market has always been one of Pete Garners fortes. Now the long-established LRP organiser will be opening his doors (or should that be portcullis?) to young adventurers during the half-term holiday, and every Saturday from September. Players aged 11 - 14 must book in advance for their scenarios, which will be run in a separate area of the caves from the normal "adult" adventures. They have their own special starting times too:- 11am and 2pm, and you can monster one adventure, and play the other. The cost is £6.50 prepaid, £7.50 on the day. Dates still available for the Autumn half-term are 22nd-24th and 31st October. Weapons and costumes are available for novice players.

TAGGING NEWS.

Club Insurance - Undergoing its genesis at the moment is the Laser Adventure federation, a loose-knit organisation of laser-tagging clubs, with the sole purpose, for the moment, of providing access to a combined insurance policy. The public liability insurance is for up to £2,000,000 and may cost as little as £6.00 per player per year. It covers public indemnity, third party and member to member. Shaun Danby of Starlore, who organised the policy says "insurance is a very important aspect of tagging that should not be neglected, and is an asset when trying to secure the use of land." Contact Shaun at 111, Berridge Road East, Forest Fields, Nottingham for more information.
The Complete Tagger - is a comprehensive collection of modifications for tag compatible weaponry, collected and compiled by the lads of The Light Brigade, and the people who bring you "Firefight". At £4.00 it's available from: 12, Earls Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, CV11 5HT. Firefight itself is a quarterly fanzine for taggers, and costs £2.00 an issue, available as above.
TAGGING SUMMER CAMP '92 - Following a small suggestion from a player that Laser-taggers really deserve their own LRP convention, several tagging groups discussed the idea, and it has now snow-balled into a full blown plan for a major event taking place in late spring/early summer of '92. The camping weekend will cater for 100-300 players with Science Fiction missions, organised skirmishes and perhaps a full battle. Participants will benefi from the considerable experience of Shaun Danby o starlore, and Lance Nielson late of the South Londo Warlords, among others, both of whom ar recognised for their weekend tagging events that ad roleplay to the realism. Other small events such a competitions and workshops are being considered fo inclusion, so if you've got any ideas along thes lines, now's the time to get in touch. Th Adventurers' guild will be running one of thei infamous Bar Room brawls, but this time set in seedy hi-tech bar on a wayfarers space station (Pa Galactic Gargle-Blasters a speciality). For mor information contact Shaun Danby, address as above.

LIVING LEGENDS

A glossy magazine produced by the Adventurers' Guild and sponsored by Labyrinthe, with contributors from all over the LRP industry - Kerys Woodcock of Creative Madness advises on "The Art of Monstering", Kevin Hassall of Western reaches discusses evolving styles of scenario design, Sam Regan of Tarragon pontificates on costume in LRP, with Liz Bates of The Adventurers' Guild giving more practical advice (& patterns!) on making cloaks and hoods. With articles on Special Effects, running adventures and characterisation, it's a journal not to be missed, and that's before you consider the complete directory of LRP clubs, professionals and suppliers that covers the last few pages! Available at independent hobby shops and LRP sites, also by mail order direct from the Adventurers' Guild, 53, Nelson Road, Basildon, Essex SS14 5QQ. Price £1.95, cheques and P.O.'s made to the Adventurers' Guild.

INSURANCE FOR LIVE ROLEPLAY

The 'Guild has been researching the insurance cover available to LRP'ers for over six months now, and after discussions with various brokers have come up with two policies, each aimed at specific areas of the hobby. The first is a group liability policy which covers specified organisers for an unlimited number of events and unlimited numbers of players annually. This is an excellent million pounds worth of policy, described by an independent broker as "the most comprehensive insurance policy I have ever seen". Ranging in its specified perils from player damaging player, to failure of caterers to turn up, to negligent instruction, it does seem to cater for every eventuality.

The second policy is a personal accident policy for the players themselves, costed at £12 per annum. It provides all the usual payments, including absence from work due to accident or injury. Unusually, it also provides a weekly payment for students unable to attend college (presumably to pay for all the photocopying of missed course notes!), and one for unemployed people unable to go job-hunting.

For a detailed information sheet on either or both policies, send an A4 SSAE to John Cable, Treasurer, The Adventurers' guild, 53, Nelson Road, Basildon, Essex SS14 5QQ.

MAIL BY MAIL

Ken Poulton, an experienced re-enactor, has recently started trading as The Mailman, offering over a decade of experience to customers wishing to buy or manufacture their own chainmail. For less than £150 (£146 until 1st Dec. '91 to be exact) he will provide a "starter pack" containing everything you need to make a short-sleeved habergeon. It includes details of the construction technique, brass mail rings for decoration, two pairs of pliers, and package and delivery to anywhere in Great Britain. All you need to supply is the patience! The rings in this kit are made of strong steel with butted ends, and so not made using the steel wire and dowelling technique prevalent amongst LRP'ers. This makes the finished suit both authentic enough for re-enactment use, and easy to construct. Also available, after years of perfecting, is riveted mail, which can be made in steel, brass for the decorative bits, or bronze if your taste runs to the Celtic. Unlike the butted rings, these ones are available in several diameters and wire gauges.

The Mailman also offers a complete made-to-measure service. He says "The proper tailoring of mail is important, because it stops the stresses caused by movement, or the weight of the garment, from falling on one ring, eventually destroying it, and then it's neighbour and so on...a sort of 'chain reaction' if you'll pardon the pun."

Ken is always willing to discuss the history and construction of mail, and suggests that if you don't know whether what you want is called a bard or a standard, that you ring up for a chat before you order. So if you're fed up with a shirt made of spring washers and fancy the real thing, contact The Mailman at: Plague Pit cottage, 71, Church Street, Chesham, Bucks. HP5 1HY. Telephone: 0494 776320.

ON THE MARKET

An infrequent look at who's who on the LRP supplier front. This month we look at who's new:

Pentagram Crafts claims to have been founded as a response to the lack of quality and originality available "to the collector of the unusual". Although dubious at first, after perusing a myriad of different items handcrafted in their workshop, I would admit they fill a gap in the market that I didn't know existed! Their potion bottles, spell books, wands, jewellry and general arcana are a delight to behold, if a little pricey to own. Each piece is lovingly made with a real flair for the gothic or mystical detail, and any fantasy devotee would make a proud owner. Apparently they also make costumes to the same high standards, but I have not yet seen the results of the seamstress' handiwork. Tel: 0603 765870 for details or send an SSAE to 56, Deneside Crescent, Hazel Grove, Stockport. SK12 7NY.

Past Tents new to me, but maybe not to the re-enactors among you, *Past Tents* specialises in, you've guessed it, authentic reproduction tents. The late mediaeval styles suitable for most fantasy LRP are amongst their specialities. Each tent design is extensively researched using period drawings and documentary evidence, it is then made from Grade A ➤

The Party - Dumnonni style.

12oz cotton duck canvas, which is then waterproofed. All tents carry a one year warranty. For a full catalogue send an A5 SSAE to *Past Tents*, 14, Batt Hall, Bulmer Road, Sudbury, Suffolk.

Margana Costumes. A welcome addition to the LRP costume industry inhabits the unlikely address of Accrington in Lancaster. The proprietress, Rose, is an experienced Live Roleplayer in the Realm World. Spending so much time in the imagination of a Goddess leaves her open minded to whatever demands you may make of her, as long as they involve costume! Margana costumes works from your own designs or ideas to create a costume that's perfect for the character you have in mind, at very reasonable prices for such a personal service. Send an SSAE for more details to Margana costumes, 81, Richmond Hill Street, Accrington, Lancs. BB5 0PZ. Telephone: 0254 389690.

Fiz Reps - an accurate name for a new company out to add that extra touch to your fantasy live roleplay. They produce spellbooks, scroll cases, leatherwork and dangly bits for the discerning adventurer, as well as stationary and jewellry to keep you "in the mood" when you're not actually down a dungeon. Clark & Christie can be contacted at Flat 21, Arosa Drive, Harbourne, Birmingham. B17 0SB. Telephone: 021 426 1104 to discuss your requirements.

News in Brief

Nexus Armoury wishes it to be known that it is no longer trading owing to the impending incarceration of its two foremost (and only) armourers in universities at opposite ends of the country. They wish to thank all their past customers for their support, and we wish them luck in their new roles as students.

Where are they now? Mark Cordurouy, still famous for his brief but glowing career as a part of **Mythlore**, is now making props for television. News reaches us that his new company, **Talisman**, is working on an eight foot dragon, among other beasties, to be used in Central Televisions adventure program - **Knightmare** - later this year.

Shadows of Sorcery in Brentwood, Essex have joined forces with a fellow Adventurers' Guild club in Chelmsford - **Battleboard**, to produce the aptly named **Hybrid**. This new company will run SF, Fantasy and Gothic adventures, with an indoor site due to open in the next six months. **Battleboard** will continue to run as an amateur group under their new banner "**Mists of Avalon**". Contact Steve Edwards on 0206 26219, or Mike Bates on 0277 624220.

Western Reaches in Sevenoaks are planning an Autumn repertoire of "shapeless" adventures. Kevin Hassal, the system creator, describes them as "largely interactive scenarios focused around a camp, shrine or ruined tower, but with 'something' out in the woods. They are designed to incorporate detective work, scouting, tactics and deviousness...to encourage and permit role-playing". Discounts are given to players with their own weapons and costume. Send an SSAE to 18, Oak Hill Road, Sevenoaks, Kent. TN13 1NP or ring - 0732 456387.

New Birmingham group **Fantasy Factory** have considerably impressed me with the quality of their "Players Guidelines", sent out to you before you book an adventure. Containing everything you need to start you off in the system, and being equally readable by the newcomer to LRP, it's worth sending your A5 SSAE for more info to: 202, Oldknow Road, Small Heath, Birmingham. B10 0HY. Adventures start running in October.

Another group to impress me of late, this time with the quality of their written scenarios and rulebook, is "**The Hooded Crow**". Based in Hertfordshire, Alan Morgan runs overland adventures with a strong Celtic flavour. Each scenario is fully designed and written up, used once, and never played again. No fear of monstering the adventure on Saturday that you are playing on Sunday! Send an SSAE for more info to: 16, Laughton Court, Borehamwood, Herts.

Trapman, Kevin "Trapman" Rutter is the tricks and traps guildsman for the *Adventurers' Guild*. He also co-ordinates **Dreamforge**, Scotland's only professional LRP group, with solo adventures for scouts included in their large repetoire of scenarios. Note **Dreamforge's** new number is 073 885 311.

The Light Brigade, Dave Bignall et al.

Events Diary

October 4th: **Paladin** - the meeting for those working to professional standards in LRP has its third gathering, hosted by the Portly Pixie in Coventry. If you would like to attend, or to receive the minutes of this, or the last two, meetings contact Roger Price on 0203 714 149

October 6th and 13th

Epic Quests - 10-12 hour wilderness adventures courtesy of **Wyrd Weavings,** set in the Dark Ages of Northumbria, and run in Durham. Dedicated props and masks have been created to provide the best in dungeon dressing bring your own characters, or have one ready made. Contact Dave Gray on 0207 520526, or write to: 42, Alderside Crescent, Mount Park, Lanchester, Durham. DH7 0P2.

October 18th - 20th

A weekend in the country - 1920's whatdunnit scenario in luxurious style. Includes Masquerade Ball, Ghost hunt and meal, silver service. A civilised weekend setting for murder. Hosted by the Adventurers Guild, call Lizi on 0268 284806 for more info.

December 6th - 8th

Samhaim - is a 44hr adventure set in the Celtic world of **Quest Adventures**. Priced at £17.00 for adventures and £8.00 for monstering, the event will be run in the Derbyshire area. Contact The Scribe, **Quest Adventures**, 7 Needham Street, Codnor, Derbyshire for more details.

December 7th

Banquet at Balgonie Castle, Scotland - sumptuous banquet and interactive scenario, scripted by your hosts, **Dreamforge.** Accommodation and adventures available throughout the weekend. Contact Kev Rutter on 073 885 311.

December 20th - 22nd

LRP by the sea! Fantasy based interactive scenario for 60 players, with twelve course banquet (or thereabouts). Whether it's a wake or a wedding feast will be decided by your actions! Contact Lizi at the Adventurers Guild on 0268 284 806 for more details.

Call For Contributions.

If you hear of, or are organising, an event you think other LRP'ers would be interested in, send in details to me at the address below, to be included in the Events Diary. Contributions in the form of reviews (700 to 1000 words) will be both appreciated and paid for. Any system, suppliers, club, re-enactment group, laser centre etc. is eligible to review. Just say what you think, bung it in an envelope, we'll check the facts and the spelling, and publish it next issue. Fame and fortune in one fell swoop...well fame anyway. Send your contributions to Lizi Graham, Livewire, 53 Nelson Road, Basildon, Essex. SS14 5QQ, or ring 0268 284806. Make sure our forthcoming diary and directory of LRP includes YOUR club! Get in touch NOW.

Lizi Graham is the events coordinator for The Adventurers Guild and editor of The Adventurer, the newsletter for live role players. ♠

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PLAY BY MAIL

POST MORTEM

We're trying with this column to vary between bringing you news of the very latest games and recommending the old and trusted favourites. This time I'm concentrating on the ones fresh off the press from a wide variety of game-masters. Next issue I'll be looking at some of the PBM games that I'd recommend to players trying PBM for the first time. Among them GBM's *Crisis*, KJC's *Monster Island* and Sloth's *Spiral Arm*.

Role Playing Games

Veteran PBMers will remember the original hand-run RPG, **Crasimoff's World**, and the announcement of its transformation last year into a computer-assisted game using the techniques developed for **Phantasmech**. It was then called **Beyond Crasimoff**, but the *'Crasimoff'* has shrunk almost into invisibility on the publicity flyer and GM Andy Smith's latest press release just calls it **Beyond**. He's now aggressively trawling for characters from hand-moderated RPGs, specifically mentioning **Saturnalia**, **AEs** and **Hunting II** as games from which characters have successfully migrated. **Beyond** features a multi-dimensional universe with all kinds of parallel worlds - decoded, this of course means 'we can set up a computer-assisted equivalent of any other scenario'. New characters are also accepted, of course, and are promised lots of experience points to compete with veterans from other games. You are set up with four other players in the initial group, an interesting and unusual departure from the RPG group game tradition that each player starts a separate party, and there are fixed deadlines to keep the action moving. Rules are £7.50, with two turns, then it's £2.50.

Another pushy company is **Imagineers**, whose rules for **The Eye Keeper** (36 neatly-typed and copied A5 pages) claim that the GMs started up as a result of the 'poor service' offered by others. They hope to 'return to the style and originality of the early days of PBM'.

A single-character hand-run game, **The Eye Keeper** is played out in four islands of the land of *Enhir*. 12 pages of rules describe a turbulent history, with much of the trouble coming from the world's original creator, Tyr Azeroth. Azeroth traded his sight and his own doomed world for the ability to create Enhir and influence its future through the Eye artifact. Through the ages he attempts to manipulate events until he is finally defeated, his life-force trapped, and his Eye lost. Now, however, terrible storms are sweeping the northern lands, and the character arrives in an atmosphere of impending doom.

The four islands and their races are described in some detail, as are eight gods you can follow. Characters are chosen by a points system (500 between six fairly standard attributes); you can also pick some **D&D**ish equipment (oil flask, length of rope, etc.). 100 more experience points are gained each turn regardless of what happened that turn (an old idea I don't personally like, as it rewards long-running players rather than creativity). The magic system usefully distinguishes between ability (which governs what you can try to learn) and power (which governs how many learned spells you can use right now). You don't find out if you successfully learned a spell until you try it out and it fizzles! - which seems nicely realistic. Players who do stirring deeds are rewarded with fame or notoriety, but you can also have a secretive character who avoids such acts. For these there is a Player Character Score which is increased for good role-playing, at the GM's discretion. Both fame and PC's help in the making of magic items and give a certain amount of credit in ability points towards your next character creation if you die (i.e. your 'descendant' will be more powerful than a normal starting character. Overall, it looks a well-planned, serious effort, though not wildly original in any obvious ways (there are doubtless hidden depths, as the rules only set the scene).

Fantasy Wargames

The **Keys of Medokh** turn fees are nov structured by turn: £1.50 for turns 1-4, rising slowl to £2.50 for turn 35+. These include a normall sufficient ration of all types of orders, though if yo plan a massive movement turn, for instance, the extr movement orders over the basic ration will add to th turn cost. Based on the generally rave reports so fa the prices still look pretty reasonable.

Hurricane Games have got the long-awaite **Battle of the Gods** ready for full launch after a lon playtest. The rules (16 neatly-typed A4 pages) ar clearly set out: you're a God, with 35 rivals and you aim in life is to gather worshippers. You hav powers in 11 'elements' (animals, disease, love water, time...), the exact mix being decided by yo on a points system. Each element gives you abou what you'd expect: if you're good at love, fo instance, you can have your wicked way wit fertility rites as well as influencing amorous an sexual behaviour among your follower (encouraging polygamy to boost the populatio might be one strategy). Activities are als constrained by your Fear Factor (do the populatio worry if you threaten them, or have a good laugh? your Divine Energy Points and the money you followers donate. You can spy, recruit, organiz missionaries, create divine servants and pretty muc anything else, since it's partly hand-moderated. C turn 17, the leading gods become (wow) Great Gods, a precondition for achieving final victory.

A clever, original-looking game. For which yo can get the rules for £1; setup is another £5 (with tw free turns), and fortnightly turns £1.80.

Non-Fantasy Wargames

Excellent news here is the launch of **Mythico**, a promising Central American civil w game from Australia. The reliable NAB Softwa are launching it imminently. To join the first gan send £5 for setup and rules; turns are £2.50. Playe take the role of governors, guerillas and variou sinister figures in a country torn by insurrectio Basically a military game, but with many tactic alliances possible, and replete with tactical tricks.

Competition for **Crisis**: Blackpool Games a offering the venerable **Battle Plan** for the first tim in this country since ICBM ran games about 6 years ago. This straightforward global wargam comes in two varieites: equal starting forces, an World War 2 historical forces. The game extremely simple with armies, air forces, spie counterspies, industries and similar basic concep but it has retained an enduring popularity in the US for 20 years, and it is replete with tactical finess which make it more of a challenge than it looks. T historical version offers varying turn fees dependi on whether you take a big power (e.g. US. £4.50/turn) or a minnor (Argentina for a quid Setup is £5 including two turns (normal game) £4.50 credit (historical game): I can't see t normal turn fee, but guess £2.

Space Operas

The final **Anthelios** rulebook appeared at the FIASCO convention; nothing flashy, but 26 neatly-typed, clearly-presented pages for this extensively tested game. Markedly less complex and deep-looking than, say, **Supernova II**, but markedly cheaper too. Turns are open-ended, but the GM believes £2.40 will cover even large empires' needs (prices have come down 25% from the full rate quoted last issue). Six ship types and just one army type (troops), abstract agricultural and industrial production, and a single tech level to be increased by research. Overall, it looks an easy-to-play introduction to space operas whose turns don't take all weekend to plan. (It wasn't the cost that made me leave **Supernova** but the time it took to run a growing empire!)

Sports Games

PAFL is currently full, and a long wait is possible as the waiting list is already non-trivial in size! So although I leaned towards this last issue, **Gameplan** is clearly the better bet if you want a reasonably fast American Football gamestart.

Other Games

Blackpool have relaunched **Illuminati**, the game of conspirators based on a *Steve Jackson* card game (but much better). **Illuminati** assumes that every conspiracy theory is true, and you take a sinister group like the *Gnomes of Zurich* or the *Bermuda Triangle* (of course a conspiracy is behind it, didn't you know?), and try to take over the world by infiltrating numerous other groups from the *Boy Sprouts* to the *Insidious Business Machines* to the *Soviet Union*. As you gain groups, they too can start to seduce other groups, giving you a network of control fanning out across numerous subgroups. All groups are rated for criminality, communism, fanaticism, and other features, and it's easiest to attack groups of opposite ratings but easiest to infiltrate groups like your own. The game is a little abstract (no map or graphical reports), but clever and demanding and a back-stabber's dream. Setup is £5, including two free turns; turn fees £2.

GM Openings

Endeavor are having trouble raising cash to advertise for players, and are offering their simple skateboarding game **Faceplant** for license or sale, probably inexpensively.

Elite are looking for a GM for **Ancient Empires** and **Global Supremacy**: 'to work in the St Albans area, odd hours, commission on turns, no experience needed but good organizational skills and familiarity with computers'.

Frontline are looking for a programmer to do their next game (freelance, no doubt).

Magazines

M&E (see Galactic View), the GMs of **Super Soccer**, have announced a planned new PBM magazine 'like **FlagShip** only better'. The initial, dot-matrix-printed, flyer to GMs requested three free review positions in every game, so perhaps they plan lots of comparative reviews. No more details here yet, we'll report back when the first issue appears.

After numerous recent folds, there are only two specialist PBM magazines still around, both long-running stayers. These are worth looking at if you want to supplement your monthly **Gamesman** PBM news with reviews and features in greater depth than we have space for. John Woodall's quarterly **PBM Scroll** has surmounted a variety of recent problems and is now up to issue 16, the best presented yet. 44 pages long, **Scroll** is noted particularly for its excellent coverage of sports games (two of the five reviews in the current issue) and wargames, and its relaxed, chatty style (£6.80 for four issues from 91 Wandle Rd, Morden, Surrey SM4 6AD). The alternative is **Flagship**, which I edit. This is bimonthly, and currently on issue 33, with 56 pages. **Flagship** has won every PBM convention magazine award since it was founded, and aims for comprehensive coverage. each issue usually has 20-30 articles and regular features on every aspect of PBM. It's noted for the quality of its presentation and reviews, and is strongest in coverage of wargames and (in recent issues) role-playing games. Flagship costs £13.50 for six issues, with a guarantee that if you say within a month that you were disappointed in the first one, you get the whole sum back. If you want to try this, it's PO Box 1733, Handsworth, Birmingham B20 2PP. **Flagship** also offer an introduction for novices to PBM: this is free if you send a large SSAE.

Conventions

Peter Calcraft, who has being organizing Manorcon for several years, is tired of doing it almost without help. He appeals for support: living in the Birmingham area would be helpful but help from anyone willing to do part of the preparations (canvassing GMs, for instance) would be welcome. He's on 0305-267658 if you'd like to discuss it with him.

London 1992. After some uncertainty about this key event in the PBM calendar, it's now been fixed. It's on March 7th at York Hall Baths, Bethnal Green, London E2. Make a note in your diary - more details nearer the time!

To sign up for a game, find it on the list below, find the firm running it on your company list and send them the sum under Rules & Startup. You will be sent a rulebook and any starting materials (order sheets, maps etc.) needed and you will be given the number of free turns listed under Free Turns. After that, the cost per turn is as shown in the Turn Fee column.

UK

Blackpool Games, 4a Crescent East, Cleveleys, Blackpool, Lancs FY5 2UL **BLA**
Crasiworld,4 Crescent Ave,Cleveleys,Blockpool FY5 3JE **CRA**
Elite PBM Ltd., POB 374, Harpenden, Herts AL5 5DA **ELI**
Frontline Games, 97 Laceyfields Wood, Langley Heanor DE7 7HL **FRO**
Hurricane Games,37 Ash Close, walters Ash, High Wycombe, Berks HP14 4TR **HUR**
Imagineers, POB 1334, The High St, Canvey Island, Essex SS8 7RX **IMA**
NAB Software,7 Oakwood Dr,Aspley,Notts NG8 3LZ NAB
Rampage Games, Unit 6, Beechwood Centre, Woodlesford, Leeds LS26 8RE **RAM**
Software Simulations, Georgian House,Trinity St, Dorchester,Dorset DT1 1UB **SOF**
State of Mind Games, POB 378, Cardiff CF5 1YD **SOM**

The first column shows if the game is run by computer (C), human (H) or mixed (M).
For the Other Fees column, the following footnotes apply:(a) More for larger positions or later turns in the game, (b) More for battle reports, (c) More for extended orders, (d) More for several possible extras.
Occasional optional extras like a newsletter are not included in the prices unless we judge that they are fairly frequent and essential for enjoyment of the game. Some GMs give discounts if you pay for a batch of turns in advance.

	GM	Rules & Startup	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Other Fees	Game
Anthelios	C	SOM	5.00	5	1.20	(c)
Battle of the Gods	H	HUR	3.00	2	1.80	No
Battle Plan	C	ICB	3.00	0	2.00	No
Beyond	M	CRA	7.50	2	2.50	No
El Mythico	C	NAB	5.00	0	2.50	No
Eye Keeper	H	IMA	5.00	1	1.75	No
Gameplan	C	SOF	4.00	2	2.50	No
Illuminati	C	BLA	5.00	2	2.00	No
Keys of Medokh	C	RAM	Free	4	1.50	(d)
Phantasmech	C	C`1`RA	7.50	2	1.95	No

It is not surprising that our national sport should be one of the best represented simulations in the field of postal gaming. Because of our love of football and everyone's conviction that they can design *the* football P.B.M. it's a buyers market out there.

Whatever you are looking for in a football game, be it complete isolation from other players or the chance to give all the characters in your squad silly names, if you look around eventually you will find it. The four games under review, Soccer Supremos, Kickabout, Football Champions and Football Director, are four of the best available, but by no means are they an exhaustive study of the genre.

All of these offer the chance to take over the management of existing teams - where the other players have dropped out - which may be the best way to dip your toe into the water and see which game is most to your liking. Waiting for a new league to start, while giving you more options in many of the games, and often the chance to actually 'create' your team, can take some time - depending on how many other players the PBM company is looking for.

GAME: Soccer Supremos

CONTACT ADDRESS: GAD Games, Marland House, Poughill, Cornwall, EX23 9EL.

COST: £5 start-up (including three free turns) in new league or free in an existing league. Turns cost £1.30 (and can be less).

Certain games and companies give off good vibes and **Soccer Supremos** scores on both counts. With clear and simple rules and light hearted, but well drawn illustrations, this is an eye catching and entertaining game.

Joining a new league, players will get a chance to name their own team, generate a squad of outrageously named players and even put a name to their home ground.

Unlike the turn replies of other games, **Soccer Supremos'** turns are a series of individual laser printed pages, rather than a continuous stream. Most of the pages are what you would expect, an update on your squad, other match results, league tables, lists of players for sale and so on.

Your own match report lists shots on target, shots off target, throw-ins, corners, offsides and other details for both teams to give you the flavour of the match (generally who dominated) without too much detail. There are presently around 2,000 active players in the game, (64 in each league) but be warned, at the moment several of the features - particularly ones that attracted me to the game in the first place, that allow for more involvement in team management than many games - are not actually available. GAD have a full time programmer working on the game and expect to have all facets of it up and running soon.

The company's future plans for the game include expansion into different levels so that while keeping the price low players can develop beyond the basic turn sheet with the introduction of a Gamesplan turnsheet and a Finance turnsheet, each of which will cost about an extra 50p, taking over areas which have normally been controlled by the computer.

The Gamesplan sheet will allow team tactics for every quarter of an hour of match, along with training, half-time talks, formations, marking and so on, while the finance sheet explores the area of shares, wages, bribes, insurance and transfer deals. These future plans are scheduled for the end of the year.

GAME: Football Director

CONTACT ADDRESS: RW Games, 39 Berry View, Newsome, Huddersfield, HD4 6LQ.

COST: £1.25 per turn or £25 the whole season. Special introductory offer of five turns for £5.

An adaption of the popular computer game, **Football Director II** (£24.99 from D&H Games for IBM PC, Atari ST and Amiga) the games PBM career began in October 1990 and it now has approximately 300 players from all walks of life, many new to the world of play-by-mail.

This is in fact an ideal game for anyone new to this type of gaming because it is very simple, perhaps a bit to simple for some of the die hard rules accountants, and avoids all inter-player communication. While some may relish this aspect of the game, for others the prospect of midnight phonecalls from insomniac 14 year olds waiting to discuss transfer deals is horrifying enough to discourage them from postal gaming.

This is the most straight forward of the games under review this month, with turn replies limited to team changes, how many hours of training you want your men to do and any financial dealings (buying and selling players and staff).

For your money you get a multi-page print out each turn that starts with your club's financial situation (you get to decide ticket prices, which I thought was a nice touch), a list of your staff, youth squad hopefuls and then your full squad. Match details are limited to who scored and when, and the team line-ups of both sides. You then get a complete listing of every match that took place that week and its gate, along with league tables, listings of the leading goal scorers and the next weeks fixtures.

Staff changes at each club are then listed, with a table of newly available employees (their skill and wage) and new players on the transfer market (their price and position). The print out ends with a notice board where team managers can post messages to other teams - players for sale, physios wanted etc.

RW Games are currently working on **Rugby League Director**, due to be running mid-October, with a cricket simulation to follow next spring.

GAME: Football Champions

CONTACT ADDRESS: Games By Mail, 5 Town Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral, L64 4DE.

COST: £3 start-up (including two free turns). £2 per turn.

The rules are quite straight forward, putting you in charge of a club's first team, reserve team and youth team. I personally found this a bit too much to handle, preferring to concentrate on the first team, but if you are looking for long term development in a team perhaps this is the way to go.

The game uses the names of real football clubs, but the names of the players and club management are computer generated and unchanging. With the three squads to look after the game tends to be administration heavy, especially in the team selections for each match, of which there are usually two and often more.

Player training is very simple, choosing a style of training and amount of effort for each squad each day, and one of the game's highlights is the ability to decide what sort of pep-talk the will give the players before a game, and then at half-time (whether they are winning, losing or drawing).

However, what sets this game apart from others is the match reports. The other games under review this month give minimum details of each match, not much more than the number of shots and who scored the goals, but **Football Champions** gives a running commentary of the match highlights. Sure, these are computer generated statements with the relevant names slotted in, but they give a definite atmosphere to the actual match playing that other games lack. These take up the bulk of your multi-page turn print-outs, the rest giving a rough idea of how training went and the current state of play with your squads (fitness, skill and so on). Each turn includes a photocopied newsletter which gives match results, league tables, player messages and list of characters on the transfer market.

GAME: Kickabout

CONTACT ADDRESS: Spellbinder Games, 6a High Street, Wath-upon-Dearne, Rotherham, South Yorks, S63 7QG.

COST: £5 start-up (includes back newsletters) £1.50 per turn.

The first thing that hits you upon reading the 2 page A4 rulebook is that this is not a simple game. Packed with tables, charts and abbreviations this is a game for the *serious* gamer who doesn't mind wading through a mountain of calculations and paperwork to decide on team selection and tactics for each match.

Kickabout's big draw back is this over abundance of administration - is it really necessary to have to spell out the name of each player, his age and skill each time he is selected to play (aren't these little details stored on the computer?). The rules are very precise on the number of points that a team has to spend on the weather, the ground quality, the formation played in, the captain's age and experience, and whereas the games reviewed above might - at a stretch - be seen as roleplaying **Kickabout**, by its depth of rules, is most definitely a tactical wargame.

Without a doubt all this detail is relevant, and players must enjoy it as come awards night in the PBM world this is a popular choice, but I feel a game of this nature can suffer from too much mathematics and lose the fun that makes football great.

Turn print-outs give an overview of the squad and the latest financial situation (player contracts run for a number of turns rather than seasons, as in other games, so managers will find themselves constantly involved in contractual wrangles) and the match reports , which give a general idea of how each area of the team (goalkeeper, sweeper, defence, midfield and attack) performed, the teams overall effort, number of shots, shots on target and goals.

The best aspect of **Kickabout** though is its newsletter, which resembles a small fanzine in itself. Each issue starts with a weather report then a number of detailed match reports, written in a semi-serious journalistic style. These make great reading and give a good idea of what teams you are about to face are like, without bombarding you with facts and figures.

The newsletter also includes the usual list of match results and league tables, along with a Hall of Shame (of suspended players), general news about **Kickabout** and other Spellbinder games, as well as weather forecast for the next turn.

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*For the context of this promotion, music also incorporates spoken word.

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WH SMITH

RANK & FILE

This month *Gamesman* sees the start of another regular column; as you can see it's called *Rank and File*. This column will, in the main, be looking at the field of historical wargaming, exploring different eras and examining different rule systems. However, this month Graham Daniel looks at the alternative to expensive fantasy specific figures, that is 'historical' figurines.

It never fails to amaze me that a whole generation of wargamers, and I am talking about fantasy wargamers in particular, seem to have become blinkered, limiting themselves to fighting out their battles in one scale, most notably 25mm (or is it 32mm?), and purchasing figures from a few companies who spend buckets of cash on blister packs and expensive advertising campaigns. Perhaps one of the main reasons for the poor attitude of players to 'historical' miniatures manufacturers has been the company's failure to advertise outside of magazines that would only be of interest to those that play in the scale or periods that the companies produce, however, this is not all their fault and at least some of the blame should fall upon the players that fail to acknowledge the fact that there are other games and other scales to play in.

I have been wargaming for several years now, and play both fantasy and historical games in several different systems and scales and all of them are, without a doubt, equally enjoyable. Now, I'd be the first to admit that I haven't got that much money to spend, in fact after everything is said and done I may have six or seven pounds a month to fork out on figures; at a push I may even be able to scrape together enough cash to purchase another set of fantasy or historical rules to add to my collection, however, this does not stop me from enjoying the hobby and in two to three months, even on my budget, I can build up a fairly decent army of fifty to sixty 25mm metal miniatures. Alternatively I can purchase a 1000 pt. army complete with chariots, cavalry or artillery pieces (depending on what era I concentrate on) in 15mm or kit myself out with an entire campaign's figure complement in 6mm, whether it be a Napoleonic army or WWII tank divisions, for an outlay that most **Warhammer** players would be staggered at. There is no real knack to doing this, I don't cast my own miniatures, nor am I particularly friendly with the MD of a company that will give me massive discounts, the only real trick is in knowing where to look for the miniatures that you are interested in.

If you're stuck in the 'fantasy wargame rules are the only ones readily available' rut then you're looking in the wrong game shops and reading the wrong magazines. Most miniature companies produce a far greater range than 25mm fantasy armies and if you contact them they will not only send you a catalogue detailing their product range they may even be able to suggest some relatively cheap and playable rules that are readily available Read this column or pick up a copy of Wargames Illustrated or Military Modelling and you will see many company's, familiar to you because of their fantasy products, historical ranges covered. You best bet is to pick an era that appeals to you and chase up any companies that produce figures for that era. Just as an aside here you may be able to combine both historical and fantasy wargaming since 'historical' human armies, especially Saxons Vikings, Normans and Crusaders can be played in many fantasy systems; Crusaders especially make excellent 'Old World' knights. If you are **Warhammer** fan try the **Wargames Foundry**, they stock the fist three eras at least. Something that may well surprise you is the fact that most 25mm historical wargames figures tend to retail at around half the price of regular fantasy figures, one of the reasons being that they tend to be produced in larger batches than their fantasy counterparts. The historical ranges, in general, do tend to be a little less detailed, however, not so much as to make them featureless, they are definitely worth the price.

Miniature Figurines Ltd 15mm Prussian Hussars

Miniature Figurines Ltd 15mm Napoleonic Saxon Infantry

If you are interested in starting historic wargaming but you have always been a little wary forking out mountains of dosh, only to find that y hate it, then it is probably a good idea to scale do your ideas,literally 20mm miniatures are moderat cheaper and in many cases no less detailed th 25mm ranges, however, when the cost is your m consideration your best bet is going to be purchas 15mm, 9mm (1/200th) or 6mm (1/300th) arm 15mm miniatures retail at around 12 pence each those on foot and 20-25 pence each for cavalry expect a little difference in price either way as y shop around) their main advantage is that, altho they are cheap, they still offer at least a fair amo of detail. Perhaps the best way in which to purch these figures is in complete armies or packs; it work out a lot cheaper since the packs often incl around eight figures on foot for a pound. So companies offer regimental packs of 30 or so figu for around £4.00 and most offer complete armie something like 100 troops on foot for £10.00 ar

L-R: 6mm Heroics & Ros Napoleonic, 6mm Scotia WWII French Char Tank, 15mm Minifigs Napoleonic

mixture of foot and cavalry for £15.00 . If you are still intent on fantasy battles alone then 15mm fantasy armies may be the ticket; **Irregular Miniatures**, for instance, offer a good range of 15mm Dwarves along with the more recent addition of Orcs, while **Warrior Miniatures** offer a 130 piece Fantasy army, including the forces of good, for £9.95 + £1.30 p&p and a 126 piece evil army for the same price, but do remember that they also offer ancient armies, American and English Civil War armies for the same price. If you are interested in other periods **Essex Miniatures** do a decent 15mm Seven Years War range and **Dixon Miniatures** have a stock The age of Marlborough and the Indian Mutiny range, while **Minituare Figurines Ltd.** have a great range of 15mm Napoleonics.

Moving down in size further still we get the 1/200th or 9mm scale armies. Here detail is still present but not in great quantity; again they are far cheaper than 25mm or 15mm ranges but if you are just starting in the historical field and are interested in starting in a small but cheap way try 1/300th or 6mm scale battles. There is little detail to the figures, however, the price per figure is negligible and whole armies can be purchased for a fraction of the cost of larger scale armies. 50 infantry figures or 20 cavalry figures will cost you around £1.50 in this scale and you can purchase two entire armies for eight or nine pounds. If you're interested try **Heroics and Ros's** historical ranges. If you are a fantasy wargamer and you fancy trying something in this scale then, again, **Irregular Miniatures** can offer you 6mm fantasy battle packs featuring 360 men, chariots and three 'creatures' along with a rule book for fantasy battles in this scale for £10.00 + £1.25 p&p, you choose any two armies from Orcs, Men, Elves, Dwarves, Goblins, Dark Elves or Halflings. Irregular also offer a range of 6mm fantasy additions: war engines and foul beasties like two headed giants retail at around 40p each. Alternatively you could try their 6mm Sci-fi packs which feature 58 tanks, vehicles and infantry plus a set of rules for £15.00 plus £1.85 p&p. 1/200th and 1/300th scale vehicles and tanks are also an option that should be considered; 9mm scale vehicles and tanks retail at around 50p, with a decent range available from **Skytrex Ltd.**; 6mm scale models are again cheaper and your best bet here is probably **Scotia Micromodels**, the 9mm vehicles are slightly more substantial than their 6mm counterparts and it is really a matter of taste as to which you prefer.

Rules systems are a different kettle of fish all together, and there are many, many different versions available. You can take it as read that they will not be as well presented as most fantasy battle rules however they do retail at very reasonable prices. The Wargames Research Group (W.R.G.) have rules for a variety of eras and scales and most retail at around £4.00 with additional army listings for each rules system retailing at a slightly lower price, Newbury Rules also retail at around the same price. Most companies will sell you these rules and some even produce their own e.g **Heroics and Ros, Table Top Games** and **Irregular Miniatures.** The low cost of many 'historical' rules systems means that your start up costs are reduced considerably, and if you like what you see then you may want to move onto more detailed, and somewhat more expensive, systems, such as Games Design Workshop's *Command Decision* series, that includes **Over The Top**, a WWI miniatures rule system that can be used with a variety of scales, the presentation is also far more glossy and they retail at around £8 or 9.

Just remember that there is a considerable variety of very cheap and good quality figures available that you do not see advertised in the fantasy games press all that often. The range of historical periods that are covered is wonderfully diverse and many of the ancient and mediaeval armies are fairly compatible with most fantasy systems. Don't be put of by the cost either, as I mentioned earlier even 25mm historical figures retail at around half the price of conventional fantasy miniatures, and if you reduce the scale you reduce the price, all the fun at a fraction of the cost. Broaden your horizons and try the historical scene for a while, even if you try it and don't like it you'll have found several sources of cheap, quality figures with which you can fill out the ranks of your fantasy armies.

Contact Addresses

See Microcosm in **Gamesman #1** for more addresses and information.

Dixon Miniatures: Spring Grove Mills, Linthwaite, Huddersfield, W. Yorks., HD7 5QG. Tel. 0484 846162.

Essex Miniatures: Unit 1, Shannon Square, Thames Estuary Estate, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 0PE. Tel. 0268 682309.

Heroics and Ros: Unit 12, Semington Turnpike, Semington, Trowbridge, Wilts. BA14 6LB. Tel. 0380 870228.

Irregular Miniatures: 4 Park road, Norton, Malton, N. Yorks, YO17 9EA. Tel. 0653 697693.

Miniature Figurines Ltd. 1/5 Graham Road, Southampton, Hampshire, SO2 0AX.

Museum Miniatures: 17 Hilderthorpe Road, Bridlington, YO15 3AY. Tel. 0262 670421.

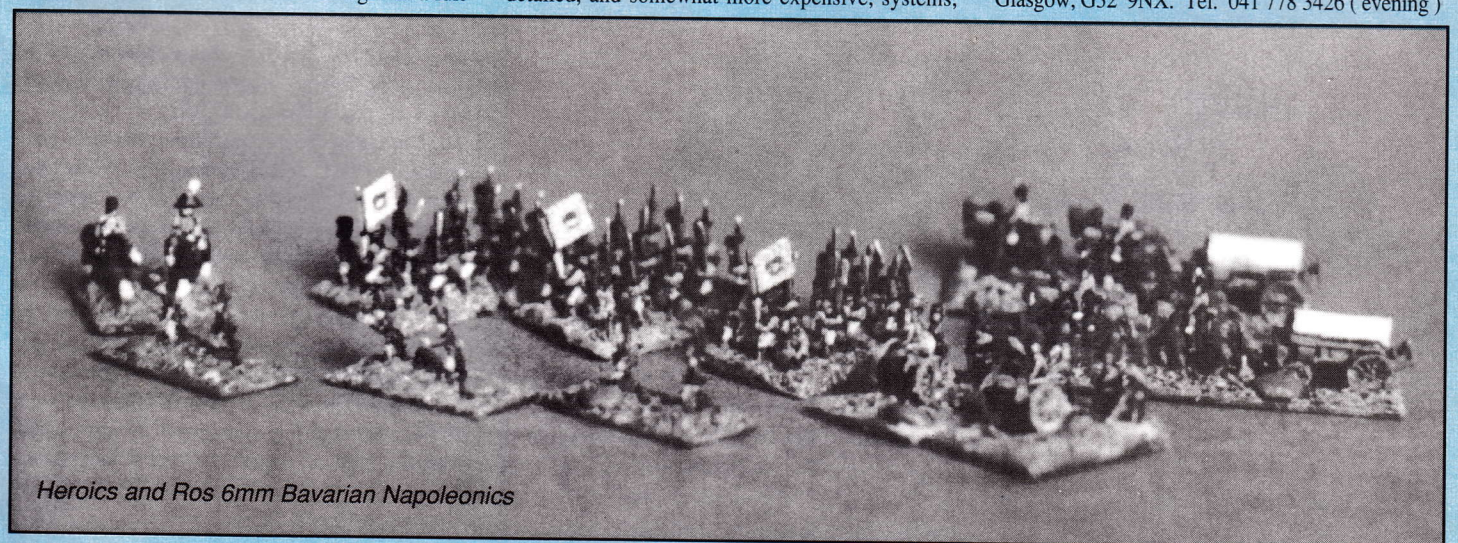
Scotia Micromodels: 32 West Hemming Street, St. Letham, Angus, Scotland, DD8 2PU. Tel. 030 781494.

Skytrex Limited: 28 Brook Street, Wymeswold, Loughborough, Leicestershire. Tel. 0509 213789.

Table Top Games: 53 Mansfield Road, Daybrook, Nottingham, NG5 6BB.

Wargames Foundry: 4a Parkyn Road,Daybrook, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 6BG.

Warrior Miniatures: 14 Tiverton Avenue, Glasgow, G32 9NX. Tel. 041 778 3426 (evening)



Heroics and Ros 6mm Bavarian Napoleonics

MICRO MINIATURES

The imagery and mythology of the 'Wild West' has been embraced and expanded by several generations, from its historical roots to the fantasies of the movie screen. That process is still vividly in action, illustrated by the popularity of the film Young Guns. The idea of Cowboys and Indians is as deep-rooted in Western culture as that of drinking Coke. That being the case it seems strange that the popularity of 'Wild West' gaming has not matched this appeal.

In this month's column I am going to attempt to redress this imbalance. Numerous rules and figure ranges exist that enable Rolegamers and Wargamers alike to recreate this myth. The most available figure scale is 25mm; the figure's size offers sufficient detail for both Rolegaming, and quite large scale skirmishes.

Dixon Miniatures are a primary source in this field. Their famous 25mm American Civil War range will provide any amount of varied action poses for US Cavalry figures. In addition to this they offer a specific *'Old American West'* selection. This consists of nine basic poses. This may sound relatively small, but is in actuality more diverse, due to their use of head 'variants'. This means that each figure can appear quite different depending upon the attached head, multiplying the selection appropriately.

The figures themselves are clearly cast, with a pleasing fluidity of action, due to the strongly defined creases in their clothing. The depiction itself is of an historical nature; the unshaven faces, jackets and hats are closely based upon the 'real' western style of dress. All this supported by the characters range of weaponry: pistols, rifles and sawn-off shotgun are all available. These factors all combine to produce strong individualisation.

It would be a gross failure on my part if I didn't also mention the excellent accessories to this range, in the form of wagonry. Available are a Stagecoach, Chuck Wagon and covered Trail Wagon (Prairie Schooner), all with corresponding Horse or Mule teams. These are sturdy constructions, with detail a plenty, which succeeds in conveying the same atmosphere as the foot figures.

In the previous section I emphasised that *Dixon Miniatures* have concentrated upon an 'historical' feel. This mean that they present figures of individuals as they were, not as the films would have liked them to look. In contrast to this *TTG's* 25mm figures favour a mythical approach.

Butch Cassidy, Buffalo Bill and the Man with no name are all available, along with a good supporting cast. This is a reasonable range of western gunfight foot figures. The style of the figures may not be as highly polished as *Dixon*, but they are of a good standard. The Man with no name is a particularly good representation of Clint Eastwood in one of his more familiar roles; complete with poncho, stubble, and cigar clenched between his teeth.

Whereas *Dixon* offer a good spread of universal figures, *TTG* supply some very specific characters. I would recommend potential players to select a mix from all the ranges mentioned to achieve that all important diversity.

One of the oldest figure ranges still available is that still being cast by *Skytrex*. It's age does tend to show. The figures are fairly simplistic, and in some respects a little crude. This does not mean that they should be dismissed for, as with most wargames figures, they retail for around a third of the price of rolegaming figures. It is also a worthwhile range because of the inclusion of several Mexicans.

The one weakness in all the above ranges is a lack of specific US Cavalry who are as common in any western movie as that of a fast-drawin gunslinger. But do not despair, the next two firm offerings are just the ticket. *Rafm Miniatures* with 'Boot & Saddles' range, and *Britannia Miniatur* 'The Little Big Horn'.

One of Dixon's Gunfighters

Hinchliffe's Gunfighter firing pistol

The former is a range with reasonable scop incorporating both foot and mounted Cavalry ar Indians. The poses and weaponry available cove most needs. In amongst this range is also hidden couple of gunfighters. Of note is the *'Mexic Gunslinger'*. The only criticism is the somewh static nature of the figure poses, which fail to portr much sense of action.

Brittania Miniatures have concentrated solely the *'Plains Wars'*, providing a good mix of Indi and Cavalry protagonists. The diversity here greater than *Rafm's*, including wagons, artillery a even a gatling gun. Again worth checking out t Civilian and Crow scouts for the gunfight enthusiasts.

If one decides that larger fights between Cava and Indians is wanted then it might also be wo thinking about using another figure scale. As I' said before this is due to considerations of cost, spa and painting effort required.

TTG provide this option in 15mm scale. Th produce a small *'Pony Wars'* range of Indian figur which includes a few civilians. The US Cavalry covered by their sufficiently extensive ACW ran The latter also offers a full choice of artillery mode

In an even smaller scale *Irregular Miniatu* supply all that you could possibly require in 6m This range encompasses all the obvious requireme of Indians, Cavalry, and settlers, but then goes or offer some real delights. These latter objects desire being Teepees, Wagons, gatling guns, Buffa even a full train set and giant Cacti.

The figures mentioned above have all b specific to the late era of the 'Wild West' t existedafter the Civil war. However, the 'last of Mohicans' and the Alamo are also strong myt Figures are available for both these era's of warf *Rafm Miniatures* cover the former period with t *'Flint & Feathers'* range. It encompasses all mainland European armies, settlers and Indians, several canoes for paddling around the Great Lake

Meanwhile, *Dixon Miniatures* offer figures the Alamo enabling one to pit the uniform Mexican infantry against the buckskinned Te defenders. Included are personality figures of D Crockett and Daniel Boone.

SHOWCASE

Last month I reviewed *Irregular Miniatures'* recently released range of 15mm Dwarves. As expected they now have some opposition, in the form of some marauding Orcs. The range produced equals that of the Dwarves, including all basic weapon types, Musicians, Standard Bearer and Chief. The Dwarve's cavalry is also matched by a wolfrider, and superseded by a Chariot.

The Orcs bear the same hallmarks as the Dwarves, having rounded features and limbs. Whereas this technique was used to emphasise the Dwarves paunches it now creates very hunched up looking Orcs. These creatures don't appear to have developed sufficiently to stand upright in order to prevent their knuckles from dragging along the ground. This effect combines well with the ugly face, lots of and clothing and barbaric looking weapons. The charicateurish nature of the designs helps create an atmospheric selection. This is especially true of the wolfrider and wolf. It is a large creature with slobbering jaws, drooping tongue, and a slinking profile. It is almost ferret-like in nature. In some respects this could be deemed a criticism, yet it actually suits the likeable nature of these castings. The figures retail for **12p** each, and with five variants per basic pose, there is real scope here for a decidedly evil-looking Orc army.

Likewise *Grenadier Models* continue to expand both their *Fantasy Personalities* and *Fantasy Warriors* ranges. The emphasis for the later is on mounted figures, there being four new releases. Two are 'character' packs, in the sense that each pack contains a mounted and foot version of the same figure. The sets are for a Liche and a Spectre.

The Spectre is a very imposing figure; dressed in full plate armour, with a grinning skull looking out from under the brim of it's helmet with an equally demonic face emblazoned upon its shield. The mount is an equally stocky horse, caparisoned with full plate barding. His companion the Liche is dressed in the skeletal finery of a Necromancer, with a long flowing robe, gory necklace of bones and magician's staff. His horse is of more nervous appearance, with decorative bridlework instead of armour.

The third pack contains two mounted Wraiths. The figures are dressed in ruffled, monkish robes - the cowls containing nothing more than hollow space. Sadly this effect is diminished by the short sleeved robe, whose lack of length reveals very human looking arms! The horses are very animated,

Mithril's Pippin and Bergil

Gernadier's Spectre

with flared nostrils, and flapping manes, the only accoutrement being in the form of tattered saddlecloth. Last in this range are two Wood-Elf cavalry. As with the previous packs the riders come separate from the horses, this time the elves legs and torsos are also divided. The join is very clean, and should glue easily. The Elves are simply dressed, one with bow, and the other with sword drawn. The horses are nicely sculpted in a cantering pose.

All the models in this range are clean, strong casts, with clearly defined, bold detail. A couple of mild criticisms though. The poses tend to be somewhat two-dimensional. Furthermore, after seeing their skeletal horses in last month's releases, I was surprised to note that all the undead figures are riding surprisingly 'alive' horses. Maybe skeletal mounts would have suited these packs better.

There are a further five accompanying releases in the *Fantasy Personalities* range. A Villain, Female Archer, Half-Elf Fighter Mage, Black and White Knights. In contrast to their companions the detail is subtler, the figures slimmer and look more natural. This style works well with the less armoured figures, in particular the Half-Elf's very nicely designed clothing, hair and expression. The lack of bulk to the Knights takes away their element of menace. The Black Knight has well designed, reptilianesque armour, but is not much taller or broader than the Half-Elf. This range is still variable, occasionally throwing up some real gems, as with the Half-Elf, yet also some bland poses, as with the White Knight. Fortunately they are packaged so that you can pick the individual that you most liked.

Mithril Miniatures latest '*Middle-Earth*' releases concentrate upon the realm of Gondor; offering Royal guards, Infantrymen, mounted and foot Officers, a Nobleman, Denethor the Steward, Faramir, Pippin,and Bergil. The style of dress, and thus continuity, between figures is very consistent. The soldiers, and Pippin, all wearing similar military tunics, emblazoned with crest, and winged/crested helmets. Accompanying figures are a pair of townsfolk, and Ioreth the Healer.

All the figures follow in the footsteps of *Mithril's* already well-defined style. Subtlety of detail, and emphasis upon broad swathes of material being the watchword, all combined with restrained naturalistic poses. The only truly action stance belongs to the infantry, running towards battle with spears at the ready.

The subdued poses, and sparse yet intense detail, continue to make these figures appealing. However, the lack of striking activity does require the emphasis to be placed on their painting. This is especially true when they produce figures like Ioreth. She stands casually pouring liquid from a jug in one hand to a cup in the other. Her clothing a cross between a nun and a nurse wearing a long, all covering, robe, headress and apron. Like the Nobleman, and one of the townsfolk, the clearest feature is the expanse of their clothing. Fortunately the accurate depiction of clothing is one of the strongest features of these designs. Likewise the Gondorian Officer's horse is one of the best I've seen, a real thoroughbred, with smoothly tapering fetlocks. The *Middle-Earth* figurines continue to have a pleasing quality, which offsets the sometimes plain stance of the figures, making them quite collectable.

The best of the bunch this time are the Townsfolk, a Sage-like character, and heavily laden traveller. These would make excellent wizard and porter figures. Pippin and Bergil who sustain there reputation for depicting Hobbits and Children. Plus the Mounted Officer and Faramir - both similar enough to make a very happy combination of foot and mounted character figurines.

Irregular's 15mm Orcs

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Dixon Miniatures: Dept MW, Spring Grove Mills, Linthwaite, Huddersfield, W.Yorks. HD7 5QG. Tel. 0484 846162.
Grenadier Models UK Ltd.: Babbage Rd., Deeside, Clwyd. CH5 2QB.
Irregular Miniatures: 69a Acomb Road, Holgate, York, N.Yorks. YO2 4EP. Tel. 0904 790597.
Mithril Miniatures: Small Dole, Harfield, Sussex. BN5 9XH.
Rafm Miniatures: 70 Harcourt Street, Newark, Notts. NG24 1RF. Tel. 0636 701439
Skytrex: 28 Brook Street, Wymeswold, Loughborough, Leicestershire. Tel. 0509 213789.
Tabletop Games (TTG): 53 Mansfield Road, Daybrook, Nottingham. NG5 6BB. Tel 0602 205484.

TELEVISION

Kevin K. Rattan has worked in T.V. for some time, recently he has written for T.V. shows such as Krypton Factor and Cluedo and is currently working as a researcher on Quest (covered in issue 3). David M. Windett interviewed him at his Rawtenstall home.

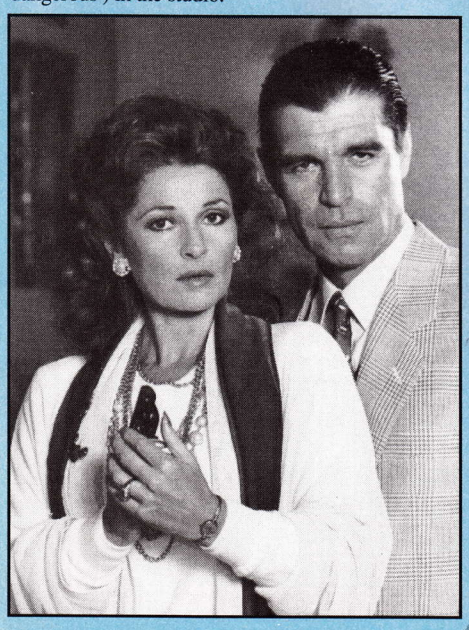
Kevin, as the writer on Cluedo, did you just write the five minute film or was there more to it?

It depends. In the first series, I was deeply involved. In the second I just contributed a script, and the producers did a lot of work which I had done in the first series. I'll answer your question with reference to the first series, since that's what I know best - and, since it's when the form of the show was set I think it will be more interesting for your readers.

So what exactly did you do?

Well initially the producer asked me to write the whole half hour. They wanted a five minute play, then the studio section of the show was to have had written dialogue for the members of the cast. And questions for members of the panel to ask. It wouldn't work so it became a proper game show.

I ended up writing a five minute script, and a follow up script for the second half. I then had to write follow up notes for the actors, so that everyone knew where they were and what they were doing when the murder happened. It was a little bit like the kind of thing I used to do as a Dungeon Master as a kid - a bunch of role play notes, but for other people, not monsters. And of course, there was a confession to write. I was also deeply involved as we went along in briefing the actors, preparing them for questions which they might be asked (all live and dangerous) in the studio.



One thing some people didn't realise was that the writer also had to decide who did it, with what, and where, all that. I didn't just hang motives on to someone else's structure. I had to come up with the whole kaboodle.

Were there any really off the wall questions?

Oh completely mad. In one episode one of the celebrity contestants got well out of hand, and started making up his own story, which had nothing whatsoever to do with what we had prepared. In another episode, I had one of the characters telling the beginning of the joke, and one of the contestants asked the actor what the joke was. There's no way you can prepare for that, we could really only prepare for logical questions that would come from the deliberate ambiguities in the play, red herrings etc. So yes there were some off the wall questions.

Watching the episodes of the programme, the contestants only appeared to work out "who done it" at the end of the show, were there any problems with people guessing who the murderer was too early?

On the whole no. The whole thing was carefully done so as not to be guessable, it was built so that as time went on any one of several people could have done it, there was no conclusive evidence, mainly because the nightmare is that they answer correctly on question one and you've got no show left. I think that once it ended early, by one round and then we had to put a round in and make it work for the sake of the audience at home. It was always done for real the contestants didn't know who'd done it, they asked real questions and only that once did we have to give them questions to ask, just to finish the programme and fill up that last round.

Did you have any particular difficulties writing such short scripts?

Well it is very unusual, but I'd had some experience, writing two and a half minute scripts along similar lines for Krypton Factor (the character Sam Smith, named after one of my favourite beers) That was useful experience, but still it's very difficult to try to tell a whole story in five minutes and put in all those clues, and give enough motive to all the characters. Its an unusual thing to have to do. I find myself watching feature films now, and thinking could have done that in twenty minutes (laughter), sit there expecting each scene to last about five seconds (more laughter).

There are no real characters in the boardgame, so how did you evolve characters for the T.V. series.

Well there are two answers, the first one is that they gave me the basic characters. The second is that I evolved those characters so that they worked better within the T.V. show setting. What I did was to put a few more character tensions in. I made Colonel Mustard and Professor Plum rivals for Miss Scarlet, I wanted to monkey around with it quite a bit, I only got part of it my way, but I was happy with the end results. Even where the basic characters were flawed - Professor Plum was too young - the quality of the actors made up for it.

The second series was different. The producers changed the actors and gave the characters different personalities and life histories, which the writers had to work to. For the first series though, I was trying to work out character relations that allowed for stresses. Those stresses had to allow the characters to lash out at people other than those in the normal group. One of the oddities of Cluedo is that the murders, unlike reality, are never domestic. You always have to kill a stranger, not a member of your cast. Actually, I used that convention to have some fun with the audience - I let them get used to obnoxious strangers always getting killed, then bumped off not the Mister Nasty in one episode, but someone wandering around in the background in a cuddly dragon suit. That kind of tinkering made it fun to do. I also enjoyed another episode where everyone sees Mrs White try to commit the murder. Only someone else gets there first (though the audience doesn't find that out till later).

Did you have a hand in casting the show, how on earth did you get Stephany Beecham to do it?

I have an idea how they got her to do it, but she was perfect for the role. My involvement with the casting was just making suggestions, in point of fact some of the actors who I personally wouldn't have chosen turned out to be some of the best, for that reason I'm glad I didn't have too much of an input.

Once the script went to the actors, did they evolve much on set during filming?

Not really. I was involved at the rehearsal stage, and that was when problems were ironed out. On the whole, there wasn't much room for changes - In practice I only had a couple of days to write each script.

How come.?

They had a writer lined up, who did a lot of Coronation Street, and was quite well established, and he dropped out at the last minute. The Directors called me up on the Friday, and I went to see the Producer on the Saturday lunchtime. I delivered a script twenty four hours later. That script wound up being used as one episode of the series, the one with the developers wanting to drain the village pond. It was murder to do - I'd been in London for a couple of days on the booze and had a monster hangover (laughter).

Was that the script with the reverend Green saving the moles?

Save the mole wasn't my idea, I wish it was, I always liked that and was rather disappointed when they dropped those kind of touches in the second series. I suppose the producer wanted to do a different kind of programme, with it being far darker, far more like a real murder mystery, and first series was much more comedic, more gags etc.

You describe Cluedo as a murder mystery, but it was light entertainment as well, did you have problems fitting the two together?

Yes, absolutely, in fact there was quite a lot of stuff that we had to edit down, it was really a very artificial thing to do. Trying to think up all these murders with a stranger getting killed for a motive that isn't too vicious. You couldn't have anybody having committed any really nasty crimes or done anything really unpleasant, the kind of thing that would really get them murdered.

The censorship sometimes went a little bit over the top, there was a lovely line from Mrs Peacock, ad lib., she changed her confession from "I didn't mean to kill him" to "I didn't mean to decapitate him", which got a huge laugh from the audience, but it was decided that it was too ghastly for early evening, so it went.

Earlier you said that you actually coached the actors to answer questions. How difficult was that and was it a very involved process?

It was a very intense process, we were filming two different shows a day so the actors had a job just knowing which show they were doing.

I would spend about an hour with the actors before each show testing them. For example I'd say to Mrs White "You were in the drawing room. What were you doing with the glass?", and she would reply "I had just found some poison and was cleaning it off" or whatever. By the end of it, they could answer questions that followed from the red herrings I'd put in.

A lot of the papers assumed that it was fixed and that it wasn't spontaneous, they were wrong, and I was very impressed with the way the actors, really got into their characters and answered questions.

Its a very hair raising thing for an actor to go in and answer questions like that and be spontaneous, fortunately they were able to use their characters, in say the case of the Reverend Green he could go on about saving moles or something when really pressed.

Did Reverend Green actually kill anyone?

No, I would have liked him to but we didn't want the first series to be too predictable, so that by the last episode the audience would know who was going to do it because it was "buggins" turn. Which a lot of the papers thought would happen and very "clever clever" T.V. reviewers were saying so. We knew this would happen so we had someone commit two murders, this meant the Reverend never got to murder anybody.

In the board game there are some well defined weapons, why didn't you use them in the series?

It was decided that the viewers might get bored seeing the same weapons each week. So what I did was use types of weapon, there was always a method of strangulation, a telephone cord or a rope, there was always a gun of some sort and I always used two bludgeon weapons, one usually inside the house and one outside.

I had quite a lot of fun with the planting of possible murder weapons, usually making sure that the contestants could see them in certain scenes. In one episode however I used the crooklock without any one actually seeing it, the producer thought no one would go for it as the murder weapon because of this, but I had the professor go outside during the play, and it worked. One of the contestants followed the line of reasoning I'd set up, saying the Professor had done it using the crooklock that he had fetched from outside. Actually they were wrong Plum did it with a black tie. It was nice to see people reasoning the way I expected.

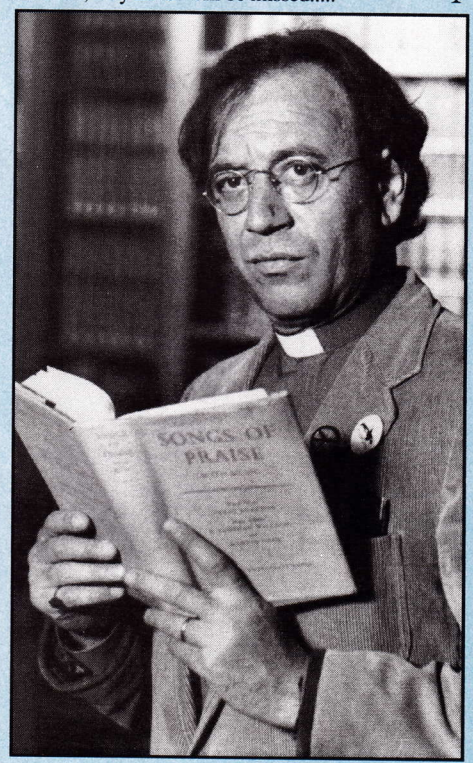
So you were playing games with the audience

Always, ultimately you can't afford to make things truly deducible, because if you do then somebody would deduce it, and there would be no programme. What I tried to do was set up an opening situation which could have any one of several logical solutions, and on the whole what pleased me was that people did develop those solutions.

I don't know what happened in the second series, because I didn't see it being recorded, but for the first series I was in the studio and I could see the contestants solving the puzzle I had set them within the logical framework of the game. If they asked the right questions and interpreted the answers correctly they could by a process of elimination find out who the murderer was.

What did you like best about Cluedo?

I got to name the characters apart from the principles. That meant I got to murder anyone I wanted in front of ten million people..... I've got a little list, they never will be missed..... ♠



IT'S NOTHING...

YOU ARE T-800

IN THE ACTION PACKED GAME-PLAY OF TERMINATOR 2, THE YEAR'S HIT MOVIE, AS IT EXPLODES ON TO YOUR COMPUTER SCREEN. SPECTACULAR GRAPHICS AND FIERCE ANIMATION THROW YOU HEADLONG INTO THE FURIOUS STORYLINE OF THE BOX OFFICE SMASH....

AND A GAME YOU WILL NEVER FORGET.

CBM AMIGA
ATARI ST
COMMODORE 64
AMSTRAD
SPECTRUM

TERMINATOR 2
JUDGMENT DAY

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COMPENDIUM

The Termination Game

A humourous jaunt into the world of Alpha Complex's TV for Paranoia players by Steven McVeety. PLEASE NOTE: THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS FOR THE EYES OF CITIZENS OF ULTRA VIOLET SECURITY CLEARANCE ONLY. IF YOUR SECURITY CLEARANCE IS BELOW ULTRA VIOLET, PLEASE REPORT IMMEDIATELY FOR TERMINATION. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

So then, exalted Gamesmaster, are you one of those persons who lies awake at night wondering what the citizens of Alpha Complex do in their spare time, after they have finished working, troubleshooting, or being terminated? If so, your years of sleepless nights have come to an end as The Computer, in all of its benevolent wisdom, has decided that its faithful servant, Stemac-V-ETY-5, can release previously classified information on the most popular past-time of the infrared masses, namely watching the superb live broadcast, closed circuit entertainment (that's TV, dummy) that is transmitted to the many corners of Alpha Complex.

These programmes are produced and broadcast from SKY sector by the Media and Entertainments Service, a sub-division of HPD & Mind Control. There is only one channel, so citizens get no choice as to what they watch. But who needs choice? After all, the programmes shown on ACCATV (Alpha Complex Computer Approved TV) are all computer approved and so, therefore, must be perfect. Not finding the programme perfect is to doubt The Computer, and that is treason. And we all know what the 'cure' for treason is don't we?

How and where the citizens watch ACCATV depends upon their security clearance. The lower security clearances tend to have to sit in huge, communal TV rooms, rather like cinemas, whereas at Ultra Violet you have your own personal TV set and can watch from the comfort and privacy of your own personal living quarters.

Some Popular Programmes:

For reasons explained above, all programmes on ACCATV are popular. However the most popular are:

The Teela O'Malley Show. Without doubt the most popular programme in Alpha Complex, and quite probably in broadcasting history. Starring that great and famous all round entertainer, Teela-O-MLY (who is the Alpha Complex equivalent of Kylie Minogue; Teela possesses very little talent but is still very popular).

Name My Treason. A member of the studio audience is selected at random and then fixed up to a lie-detector. The other members of the studio audience must then accuse him of various treasons, and he must admit or deny them (the lie-detector proving him right or wrong). If a treason is discovered, the citizen is then taken away and terminated.

Adventure Idea. If a player is in the studio audience, there is a one-in 400 chance of him being picked out to take part and be accused of various treasons. Surely those odds mean that it is highly unlikely that the player will be picked upon. Well, it would do if this wasn't Paranoia... Also the lie-detector (designed by R&D) has a tendency to malfunction, especially when the PCs are telling the truth about not committing a treason. Put one of your players in the 'hot-spot' and watch with glee as he is ruthlessly betrayed by the other players. Then put them under the hot-spot. What fun!

Candid CamBot. Starring the ever-popular Jerem-Y-BDL. In this, citizens are secretly filmed being duped into performing treasonous activities.

Adventure Idea. It isn't too difficult to spot the potential of this show.

Citizens. The story of the everyday life of the inhabitants of the RMZ sector, starring such acclaimed personalities as Don-O-Van, and Min-O-GUE.

The Telw-O-GAN Talk-Show. Telw-O interviews various Alpha Complex personalities (if they can get a word in edge-ways).

Adventure Idea. Should your players be spectacularly successful in a mission then;

1, you aren't a very good Paranoia Gamesmaster, and

2, they may well be granted an appearance on this show.

It goes without saying, however, that upon hearing how the players gallantly exposed and terminated Commie Mutant Traitors that the real Commie Mutant Traitors will not be too pleased and, regarding them as a threat, will take steps to have them eliminated. That'll teach them to succeed in a Paranoia adventure.

Alpha-Complex News. Propaganda, lies, and more lies.

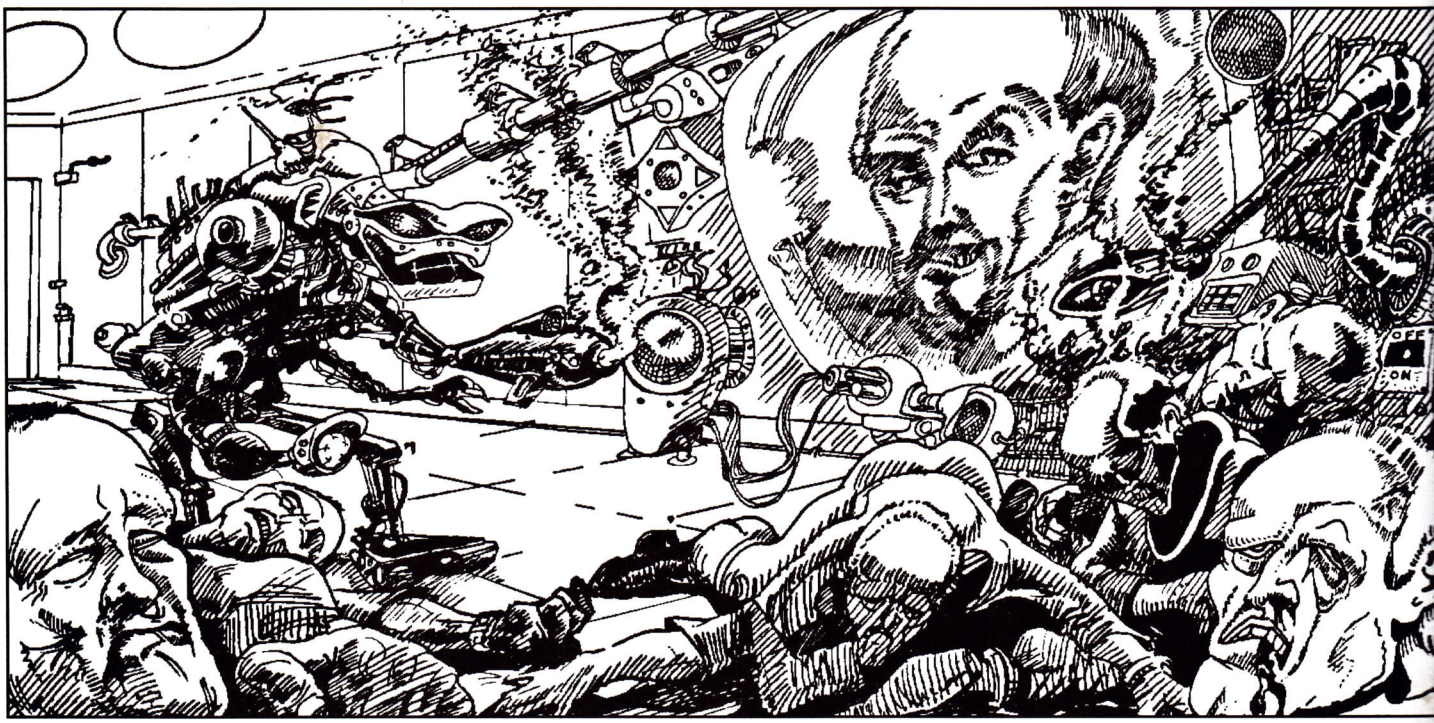
I DIDN'T QUITE CATCH THAT, FRIEND CITIZEN STEMAC-V.

"Er, I said informative and entertaining information about the goings-on in Alpha Complex, Friend Computer."

Adventure Idea. Players exposing traitors may well be mentioned on the News. Same consequences as above.

Next-Daycycle's Complex. R&D demonstrate a selection of their various inventions, all of which work (but not necessarily in the way that they were intended...). The usual method is to record the testing first, then make up a use for the object afterwards. Needless to say, most items featured are new termination devices.

Adventure Idea. R&D is always on the look-out for people to test their devices. Go for it!



Docbot Kildare. The various adventures that befall a Docbot as he loyally serves The Computer.

It'll Be Alright On The Night Cycle. Programme showing the misadventures, accidents, and unintentional vacuum implosions that can befall a team of Trouble- shooters.

Adventure Idea. I'm sure your players must have plenty of material to supply to this show, and if not what are you waiting for?

The Termination Game. ACCATV's second most popular show, presented by Fours-I-FFF. The 'contestants' are traitors, many of whom are exposed in other ACCATV shows. This show features their live, on-air terminations.

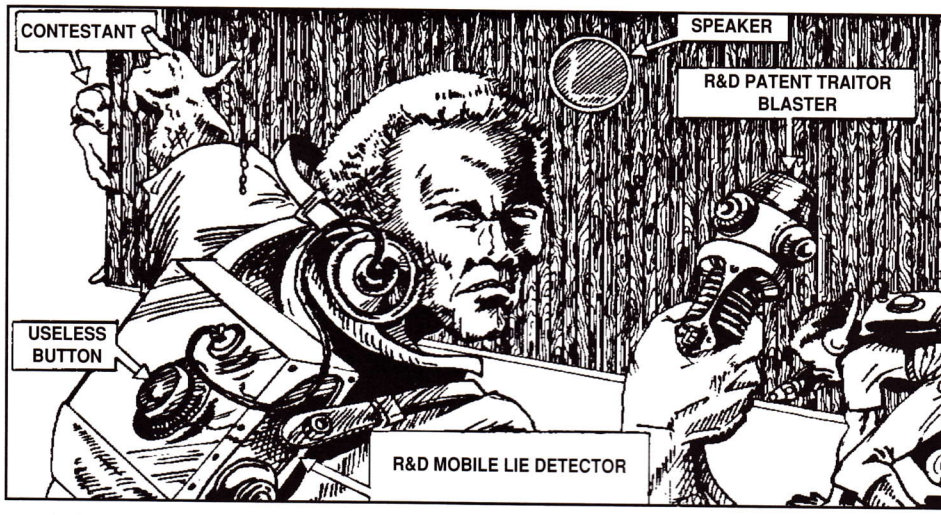
Adventure Idea. You're a Paranoia Gamesmaster. Do you really need to be told how you can get your PCs to appear on this programme?

This Is Your Clone. In this show Alpha Complex citizens meet the people who caused important events in their lives, and the lives of their clones ("and here's the Internal Security Officer who terminated your first clone...").

Masterclone. The search to find the most intelligent clone in Alpha Complex hosted by Magnusmagn-U SEN. Specialist subjects include The Life Of Teela O'Malley and....well you get the picture.

Wakey, Wakey Alpha Complex. This consists of loud music to wake the citizens up, followed by even louder music for them to do their morning exercises to.

Adventure Idea. If you're one of those GM's who like to enhance your adventures by introducing live action 'theatrics', get a very powerful tape recorder with a tape of very loud music and blast it down your players ears (to simulate being woken up, you see). And I can see no reason why the players shouldn't have to do the exercises for real.



A Cynical (and Treasonous) Note On ACCATV Programmes

All programmes are rather inane, totally lacking in any kind of intellectual content (rather like LWT really). All programmes depict Alpha Complex as a Utopia, The Computer as your friend etc. (remember, this stuff is edited by The Computer). There is not, and never will be 'serious' programming; investigative journalism, consumer programmes (WatchdogBot?), 'Allo 'Allo, etc. In Alpha Complex, entertainment's the name of the game. The masses must be kept busy so they have no time to do anything detrimental to Alpha Complex. ACCATV is nothing more than a means of transmitting propaganda to the widest possible audience.

Other Adventure Ideas.

Commie Mutant Traitors have managed to take over the air-ways and are currently transmitting treasonous information (e.g. Communis Propaganda).

Or, a secret society is doing the same, e.g. the Romantics are broadcasting Lassie films o something. They must be found and terminated.

Or, the players are members of a secret society and are ordered to seize control of the airways to further the societies cause.

Or, the players are members of a secret society whilst in fact (and unknown to the others) each player is a member of that secret society and must try to stop the other players from stopping the secret society whilst being monitored by the computer Mayhem!

Or, a High Programmer, who is also a member of the Romantics develops a liking for a particularly naff old reckoning TV show (suggestion: Hi De Hi That's Life, Harry Secombe, any soap opera) and orders the players to go (gasp!) outside to recover any old reckoning relics that are connected with this programme.

Or, ACCATV has a new show and needs a group to represent it (i.e. the players). The exact nature of the show is up to you, but it should involve lots and lots of Terminations (preferably the players). Suggestion: some kind of cookery programme involving smelly (and explosive) food vats. The players become over-night celebrities, and the target for a high-ranking Def Leopard, who decides to bump them off on-air as a publicity stunt.

Or, The Computer has come up with A great idea; Movies. The characters become movie stars; there are explosions, exciting chases, laser battles etc. Unfortunately, it would appear that the computer has heard of neither stunt-men or special effects. Can the characters survive? Or, the Computer may forget that the whole thing's just a movie, and so any characters who played a Commie Mutant Traitor may find himself in a lot of trouble.

Or, The Computer has come up with the idea of movies, whilst R&D have come up with the idea of 'Feelies'. Special sensors pass on sensations to the audience. R&D needs someone to test this device. Now, what does thermonuclear meltdown feel like.....

Or, normally, being assigned to act as a bodyguard to a major star is both a popular and easy mission. But this need not be the case. Suppose some-one is trying to bump-off the star in question. Perhaps the star wishes to 'defect' to the outside, and uses the characters as unwilling dupes in his/her plans. The possibilities are endless. So think up some of your own... ♠

Thus a typical days' schedule for ACCATV may look like this:

0700	Wakey, Wakey Alpha Complex
0800-1200	Nothing: remember, everyone is supposed to be at work at this time. Not working is treason. Occasionally, The Computer will declare a holiday, in which case special Teela O'Malley shows will be shown, or something similar.
1700	Alpha Complex News
1730	Citizens
1800	All-Time Favourite Songs (a sort of Karaoke TV show)
1830	Candid CamBot
1930	The Teela O'Malley Show
2100	Name My Treason
2200	The Termination Game
2230	A personal message from your friend, The Computer (this programme has a tendency to go over its allotted time-span, as The Computer tends to get carried away, and rants on a bit).
2245	Sleeptyme
2300	Closedown

ARCADE & CONSOLE

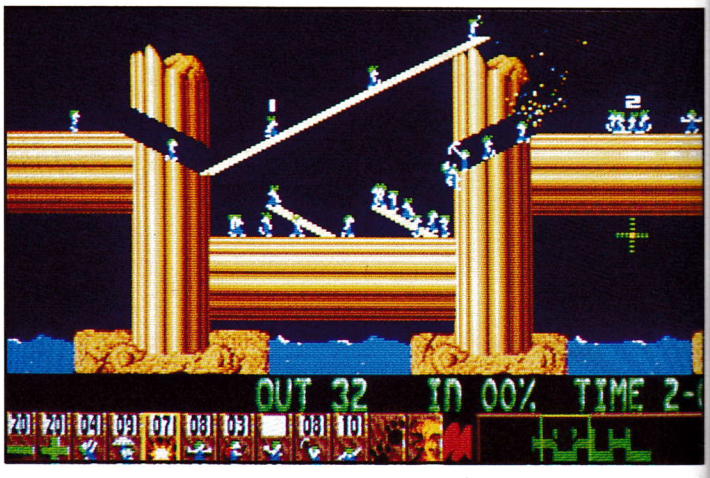
To complete Gamesman's extensive coverage of the games industry, this column will give you the lowdown on all the latest vibes from the arcade and consoles games including Sega and Nintendo systems. Tune In, Turn On and Buzz Out! To contribute to this column please mark material 'Arcade & Console' and send to the Gamesman address.

For anyone who's interested, Acclaim is now manufacturing its own NES cartridges, starting with *Smash TV*. There are also plans to release a second title soon. Mirrorsoft have also completed a deal to take several Acclaim titles and convert them for use on Sega Machines; Mirrorsoft should have the first acclaim titles out late next year with titles to include *The Simpsons*, *Terminator II* and *Smash TV*.

NES users should look out for Activision's forthcoming releases: *Die hard*, *Sword Master* and *Galaxy 500* should all be available soon while their Gameboy releases of *Ghostbusters II* and *Miami Beach Volleyball* should also make an appearance in the near future.

And lastly, Atari are going to be extremely busy between now and Christmas launching something like twenty new titles for the Lynx Handheld. These should include *Hard Drivin'*, *Scrapyard Dog*, *Viking Child*, *Pacland*, *APB*, *Chequered Flag*, *Ishido* and *Turbo Sub*. *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* may also be ready for Christmas. Other titles promised for next year are *Shadow of the Beast*, *Pitfighter* and *Lemmings*.

Perhaps the biggest release for console users this month has to be the launch, on September 1st, in the states of the 16 bit Super Nintendo Entertainment System or Super NES; more news as it arrives about release dates in this country. Sources report that there will be no great flood of titles and only around 18 will be readily available (six from Nintendo themselves and 12 from independents). More releases are expected in 1992 as around forty new titles, to accompany the system, have already been announced. The system in the U.S. is accompanied by *Super Mario World (Super Mario Bros 4)* and a whole load of promotional material that is destined to make it one of the most heavily promoted systems yet. Even with the launch of this new 16 Bit machine the market for 8 Bit games is still going strong and it will more than likely continue to be a popular format for some time to come, basically because so many machines have already been sold. New releases announced at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show (US) for 8 Bit machines include, from Konami/Ultra, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III*, *Pirates!*, *Contra Force*, *Star Trek*, *King's Quest V*, *Tiny Toon Adventures*, *Nightshade*, *Monster in My Pocket*, *Bucky O'Hare* and *Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego?*



TMNT III sees April O'Niel kidnapped and the Turtles having to use a variety of vehicles to reach her in time. *Contra Force* is the sequel to *Super C* and the third in the *Contra* series. In *Contra Force* you control a team sent out to obliterate a terrorist group that has kidnapped the head of the CIA. *Pirates!* is a swashbuckling romp in which you combat sea captains, take over islands and search for treasure. *Where in time is Carmen Sandiego?* has you travelling through time to find Carmen and her gang. Can you find her in a journey that spans 1500 years? *Nightshade* will be of interest to the roleplayers amongst you as you play a crime fighter intent on stopping the Egyptian criminal Sutekh. All of these titles show promise and most should be available in the UK soon.

Sega users should keep an eye out for Tecmagik's new licenses that should hit the shops before Christmas. These should include *Populous*, as mentioned in Gamesman #2 news, and *Shadow of the Beast*. Keep an eye out a while later for their football license *UEFA '92*. *Mike Dikta's Power Football* should also see release in October from Accolade, retailing at £39.99.

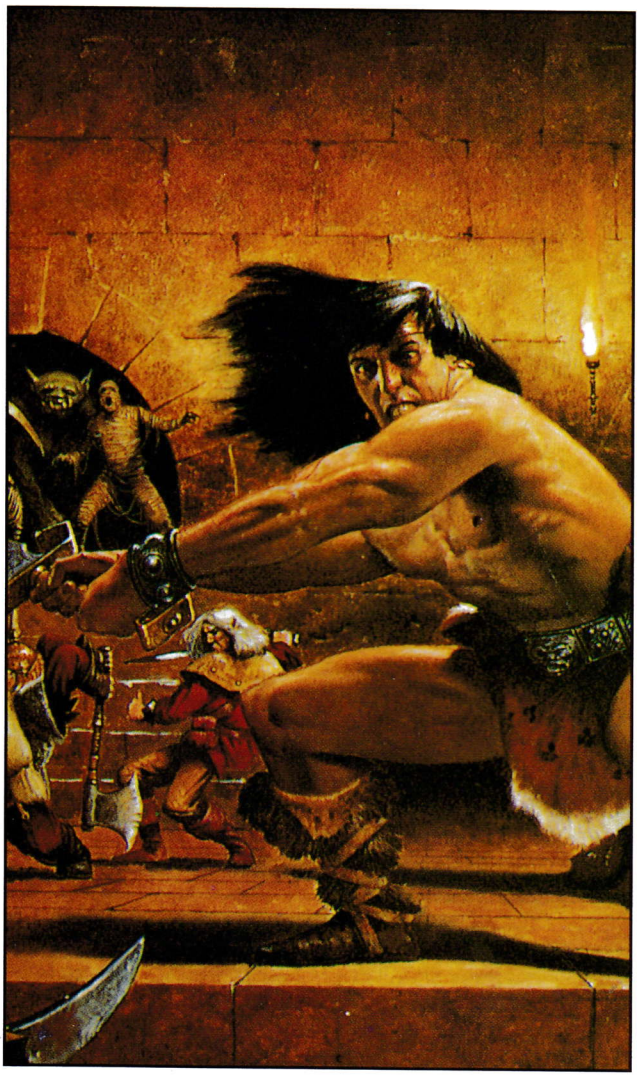
Sega giveaways are on the way as Golden Wonder offer a thousand Master System II consoles in a prize draw. The promotion starts this Autumn and should finish at the end of March next year. A million pound TV campaign starts to promote the offer beginning in October, being run on packs of *Wotsits* and *Ringos*; so if you feel lucky start munching or scour dustbins, the local park etc. for stray packets (oops! did I really say that).

From September the 1st you may also have noticed that the price of the Sega Megadrive system will have drooped to a mere £129, making the system far more competitive in the run up to Christmas, so now should be the best time to buy.

Sega owners are also in for a treat as two new magazines dealing with the subject should be hitting the stands this year. Future already have *Sega Power* up and running, with a cover price of £1.75, 70% colour and 68 pages they see future sales reaching 50,000+. Newsfield are hopefully set for the mid-October launch of *Sega Force*, also retailing at £1.75, having a minimum of 68 full colour pages. Paragon should also have the 84 page, full colour *SegaPro* out for October retailing at £1.95; all in all a busy time for Sega readers in the UK. The battle is on for the Sega readership.

Another October release on the magazine front will be the new console only *Game Zone* from Dennis Publishing. Game Zone will be covering NES, Megadrive, Master System, Super NES, Turbo Grafx, Game Gear, Lynx and Turbo Express. It will be full colour and will retail at £1.95. How well will it stand up to EMAP's multi-system Mean Machines, only time will tell.

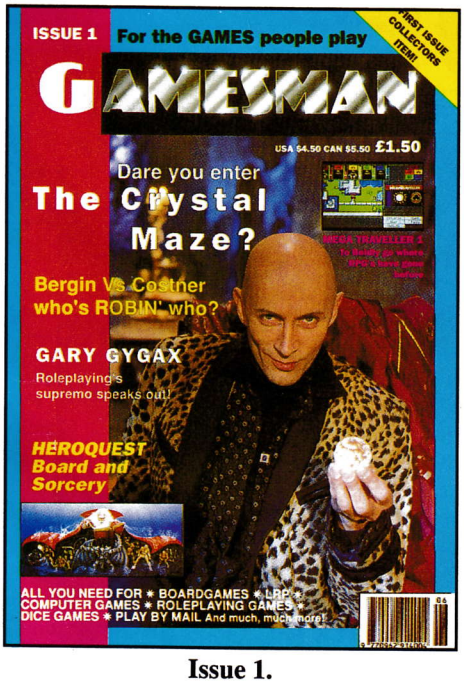
Gremlin are set for some new releases after September's European Computer Entertainment Show at Earl's Court. Console games will include *Hero Quest* and *Golf Power* for the NES, *Brain Bender* for the Gameboy and *Top racer* for the Super Famicon. At the same show electronic Arts will have several titles on show for the Sega Megadrive.



Oh and by the way, a recent article in CTW (Europe's Electronic Gaming Trade Newspaper) 2/9/91, sees most 8 bit machines as being on the way out in the wake of the arrival of consoles and the readily accessible games that they offer, lucky for you if you're already on the console bandwagon, game on!

BACK TO THE FUTURE!

To obtain Gamesman back issues please send cheques/POs made payable to Pegasus Publishing for £1.50 + 50p postage & packaging per issue to: Gamesman Back Issues, Pegasus Publishing, Bradford Court, Bradford Street, Birmingham, B12 0NS. Stocks are limited so don't delay, it's the only way to stay fully informed!



Issue 1.
The Crystal Maze, Gary Gygax, Hero Quest, Mega Traveller 1, Quasar Lser, The Keys of Medokh, Robin Hood, plus more ...

Issue 2.
Easy to Play Dungeons & Dragons, Pratchett & Gaiman, Space Crusade, Conan, Life & Death, Simpsons Dice Game, WWII, plus more ...

Issue 3.
Armour Geddon, Fantasy Warriors, Maztica, Red Dwarf, Quest, Martian Dreams, Lizardmen, TET Offensive, plus more ...

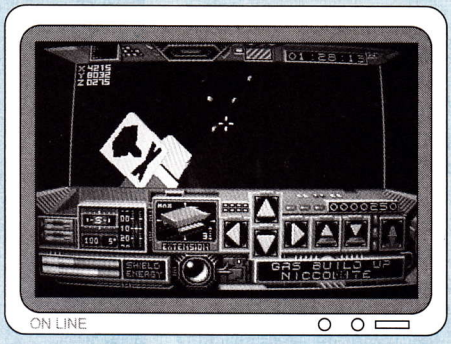
COMPUTER REVIEWS

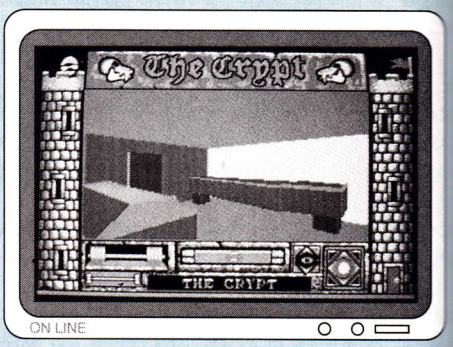
Virtual Worlds

from Domark

Format: PC, Amiga, ST, Amstrad, C64.

Price:£29.99, except C64 and Amstrad Cassette: £14.99



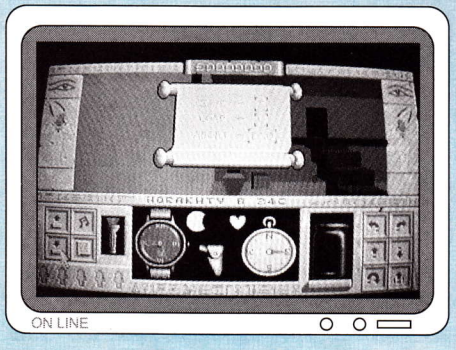


***Virtual Worlds* is another of those value for money compendiums of games that software companies are producing to gain extra mileage from past releases. To give the purchaser more incentive (this is a play on words as *Incentive* is a software division of Domark) *Virtual Worlds* contains the never before released follow up to *Castle Master - The Crypt*. Having played it I can see why it was "never before released!".**

Once again, the software companies are telling us that Vector graphic (or solid 3D as they are being referred to in the present vernacular) games are what we should be playing, and this collection of mediocrity from Domark contains four of them, exploring the possibilities of their "Freescape" and "Freescape 2" (quality) development systems.

Personally, when it first arrived on the scene, I rather enjoyed **Castle Master** , particularly the smooth and free action on screen initiated by fluent mouse control. The quest to free your "twin" from Castle Eternity was fraught with interesting tricks and traps and the game play was such that even my dislike of the graphics didn't stop me from becoming involved for hours on end in an attempt to defeat the evil Magister and return triumphant. I never did get to the end because other companies began producing such gems of adventure as **Dungeon Master** and **Bloodwych** with graphics and visual on-screen action the like of which had never before appeared on home computer screens, and Castle Master was pushed to one side and forgotten. Until now!

The Crypt - Castle master 2 contains some of the most dreadful graphics I have encountered. A large clumsy lump representing a coffin, opens to release a mouse that not even a ZX'81 would be seen dead near. Coloured screen flashes show that this "spirit" is killing you, so you aim the cursor, press the trigger, and shoot it (presumably with rocks).



Pretty impressive? Well maybe!, but considering you begin this game as a prisoner in a locked room you are very lucky to have so many rocks (or a rock on elastic) to hand in this plastic looking dungeon cell.

Open the other block (sorry, I mean box) in the room and you will see that it is empty except for a large yellow blob. If you pick this up it is actually the key to the locked door that keeps you imprisoned. Your jailer obviously has a large IQ, I mean it's a really sensible thing to do, leaving the key to the door in a large empty box (there, I got it right that time) and then go out and lock the door? Maybe you locked yourself in to get away from this game?

In **Total Eclipse** your mission is to destroy the Shrine of the Sun God Re which is located at the apex (that's the top or the summit just in case the jailer from the previous game is reading this) of a pyramid. To do this you have to collect the Ankhs which have been carelessly left lying around, and use them to open the barriers to chambers that lead to more barriers and chambers and eventually to the Shabaka chamber through which you must journey to reach the entrance to the shrine.

According to the information in the booklet there are "many unsolved mysteries", the main one being why anyone would want to play this when they could be out chasing snails or watching the grass grow.

To say I wasn't impressed is an understatement and if you look through the hints that are provided with the game you can almost read between the lines and believe that the author wasn't particularly on form when he compiled them. Such beauts as "In dark areas, use your torch" and "If all else fails try shooting it" give a fair indication of the level of intelligence required to play this game.

Driller is the fourth and final offering on **Virtual Worlds** and, after the initial interest of **Castle Master**, is probably the best reason for buying this selection.

The moon Mitral is virtually a floating gas bomb awaiting the trigger to ignite it, destroying itself, its sister moon Tricuspid and your planet. The Ketars, a race outlawed from Evath, have successfully mined all the valuable minerals from Mitral and then departed leaving the moon in such a state as to allow the build up of natural underground gas. Your mission, make all 18 sectors safe by correctly positioning drilling rigs and thus freeing and burning off the gas.

Unfortunately, there is a meteor on a collision course for the moon and there is nothing your Evathian scientists can do to divert it. They calculate that you have only a few hours before the meteor strikes, and ignites, Mitral.

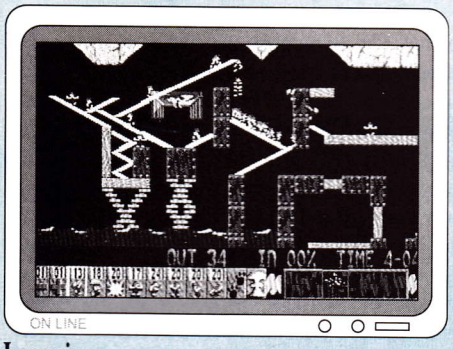
You can use joystick or keyboard to control your excavation probe as by discovering clues, or using pot luck techniques, you try to locate the correct (gas centre) position to place each drill. If you place the drilling rig in the wrong place it will be teleported back to Evath and you will have to start again in that sector.

With the time that you have running out fast it seems complicated enough. however you are hampered further by your need to find Rubicon crystals, whilst evading or destroying defensive laser beacons and skanners.

In **Driller** the graphics are not the issue that decides whether the game is playable (I find that if the game is visually pleasing to the eye it makes for a more playable and enjoyable session) or enjoyable. it is the frustration and edge of seat tension as you race against the clock to win the game and collect as many points as possible in the process. Points are awarded for various actions and evaluations as well as for discovering, locating and obtaining the crystals, and once you have completed the quest successfully, you can play it time and time again with a high score total to aim for.

Virtual Worlds contains a manual written in English and Italian, I guess this is so you can throw the games away and teach yourself a foreign language in the time you would otherwise have wasted at the computer. ♠

Review by C. Bayliss



Lemmings

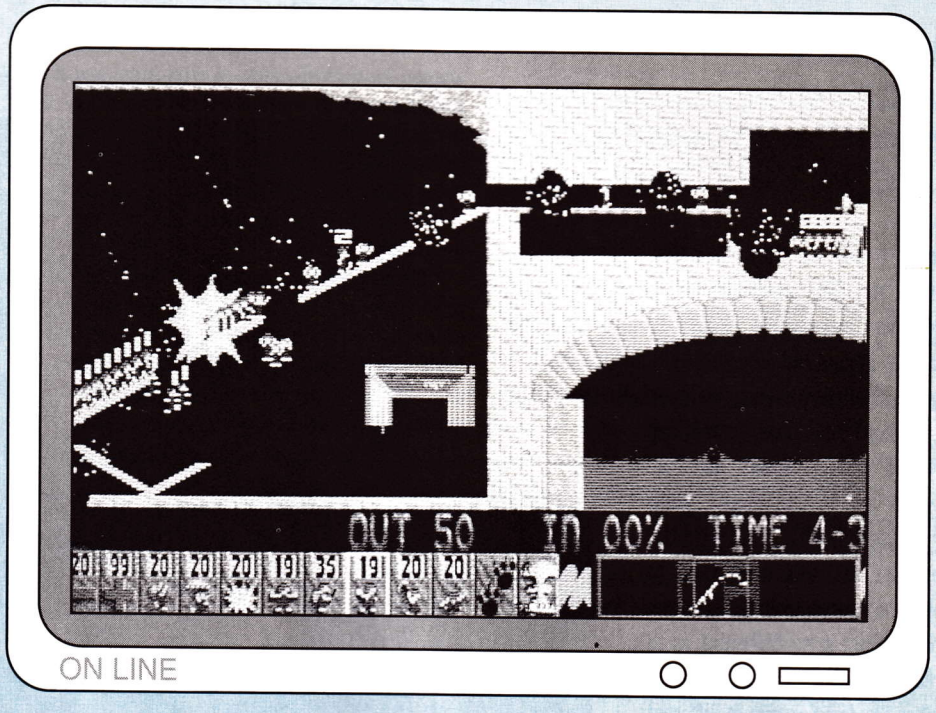
form Psygnosis

Formats: IBM, Tandy and Compatibles, Amiga, CDTV, Atari, ST.

Price: ST, Amiga: £25.99, PC: £34.99

***Lemmings* is the most addictive fun game of 1991! From the opening notes of the jolly music and the superb graphics that illustrate the credits, to the moment the last lemming escapes to the next level, you will be held at your computer by the charismatic force of these little, lost, green haired souls.**

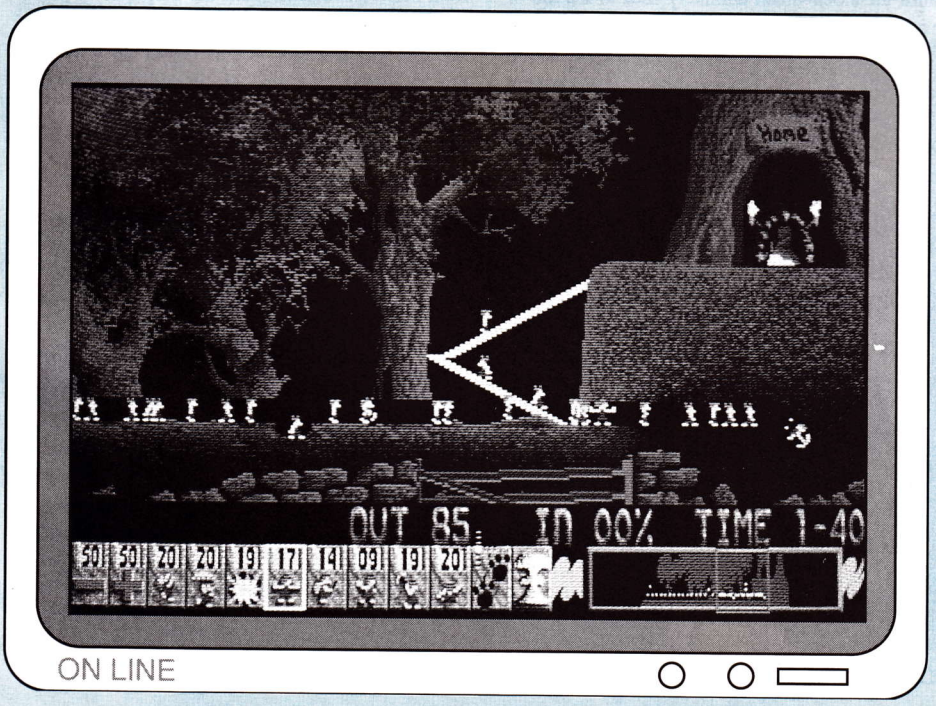
Lemmings play their own game of "follow the leader" as they drop at irregular intervals from a trapdoor into whatever environment awaits them. Using your mouse, which is a long distant cousin of the lemmings, you select the icons of "specially prepared" lemmings, one or more that you believe to have the unique ability required to assist the majority through the gate and on towards freedom. These icons represent climbers, diggers, bashers, bridge builders, floaters, and exploding lemmings, amongst others, and by clicking first on the icon required and then on one of the on-screen lemmings you will convert the moving creature into a "speciality act". Be careful to choose a lemming that is heading in the right direction or you will see some surprisingly disastrous results.



The first thirty screens, under the collective heading of "FUN", begin by telling you the icons you should choose and allow plenty of time for you to succeed. As you progress through the levels you will notice the game speeding up and the number of special lemmings increase in the variety required, but decrease in the number available, it becomes increasingly more important to use the correct Lemming at the specific time and place. For example bomb-lemmings do not explode immediately after being selected, the number five appears above them and they continue to move as the countdown continues. When it reaches one the Lemming will stop, place its fingers in its ears, give a little shimmy and shake, let out a little squeak of despair and then disintegrate in a shower of sparkling dust. It is worth exploding a few just to see the graphics in action.

If you command the Lemmings to climb a tal structure you must remember that they will need to be able to get down the other side, when a climber reaches the top of a building it will stand up and begin to walk, if it reaches the edge of a building it will simply walk over the edge and plummet towards the crushing pavement below, where, if it hits, it will dissolve into a blue green dollop before disappearing off the screen. To counter this you must turn each of the climbers into floaters either as they reach the top or as they jump off and a red and white brolly appears in their hand allowing them to paraglide to safety.

Completion of each level will give you a code to use for future entry to that screen without having to play through from the beginning each time. The codes are groups of letters that you must remember to note since you may well have a hard time remembering them. Once all thirty levels of "FUN" have been successfully negotiated you can move along to "TRICKY", "TAXING", and then "MAYHEM". Many of the screens look very complicated when first viewed, in a number of cases this is a trick to make you run the Lemmings all over the place when a simple strategy would speedily be successful, others look easy but have hidden pitfalls.



Lemmings is a beautifully animated, ingenious, inspirational, highly addictive piece of classic computer programming that will enjoy an long active life, whilst other "fun" games quickly fall from favour. It is highly recommended that you completely prepare yourself for an infinitely long playing session (refreshments at hand and a cold flannel to wipe your fevered brow, pencil and paper to note the level codes, and a sick note from the doctor to explain why you are not at work/college/school) once you load lemmings into your machine. If you are at all weak in the face of temptation under no circumstanees should you install **Lemmings** onto your harddisc - its fatal! ♠

Review by C. Bayliss

Shadow Sorcerer

From U.S. Gold

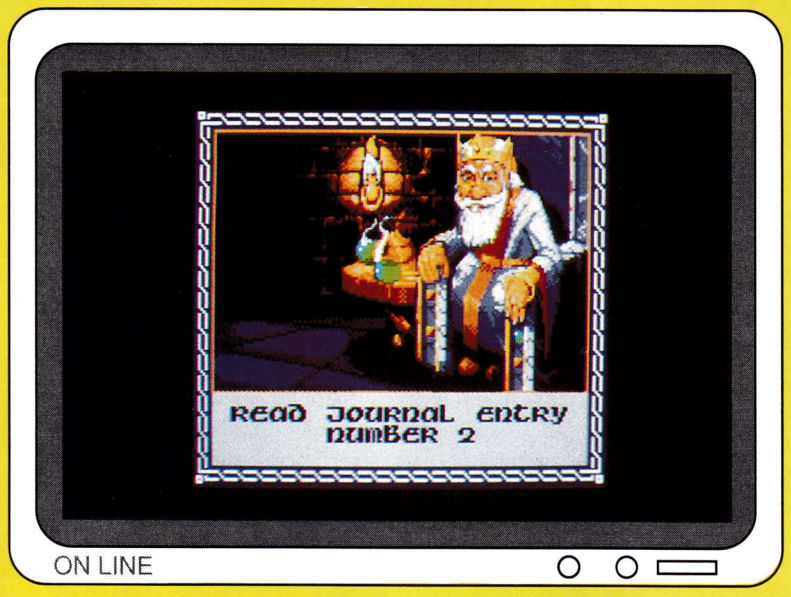
Formats: PC, Amiga (ST soon)

Price: £27.99 St & Amiga, £30.99 PC Dual Pack

Firstly I must say that after playing some of the earlier so called computer role playing computer products I approached *Shadow Sorcerer* expecting another boring old slog through various lands of legend. In my experience you invariably spend days, or weeks (real time), strolling around subterranean lairs or towers or, in the really good programs, both! Admitedly, negative attitude does tend to colour a review, unless of course, the product is so different as to break preconceived ideas. So what makes *Shadow Sorcerer* so different from the games that have gone before? A decent plot, that's what!

The story revolves around the Companions of the Lance and follows an episode from the original *Dragon Lance* saga, namely leading 500 or so refugees to safety after the companions of the lance have rescued them from the clutches of the Draconians and the evil Dragon Lord Verminaard. The companions have sealed the gates of Pax Tharkas, the Draconian mountain citadel, and must accompany the former slaves to safety before the forces of evil break free of their temporary imprisonment and hunt down their escaped slaves, and those that liberated them. Unfortunately the companions job is made even more difficult by the fact that the lands that they must travel through remain relatively unknown to them (terrain hexes are only revealed when you move into a hex adjacent to them); chance encounters, good and bad, slow their progress. If they take too long to find a safe haven for the refugees, hordes of Draconians and the dreaded Red Dragon *Ember* will catch up with them, and if that wasn't enough to worry about the companions have to deal with disgruntled refugees, who are represented by a council, finding food and shelter for them before they decide that it would be better to stay put and be caught, or even worse turn back towards Pax Tharkas.

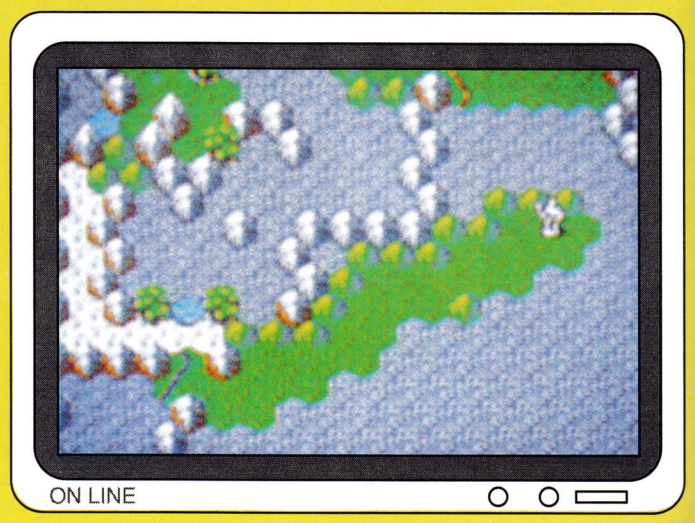
Shadow Sorcerer has many advantages over its predecessors. The first of which is the aforementioned time limit, hang around too long healing or memorising spells and the Draconians will catch up with you and the refugees, effectively ending your quest. Luckily you do have some control over the passage of time and for your first few games at least I suggest that you use the - (minus) key and slow time a little allowing you some breathing space. Optionally, as you become more experienced, you could speed up time making life far more difficult, but fun. You are playing against the clock which definitely adds to the fun of the adventure. Secondly combat takes place in a real time environment, providing fast and furious action in, of all things, a 3D isometric playing environment where your characters, and your opponents, are represented by 3D animated figures. The action is controlled by 100% point and click icon control that certainly speeds things up and allows you to control characters in the midst of the action. If you don't think you're fast enough ,however, you can programme your characters, through the use of default commands, to give you the option of having them attack in hand to hand or at range, cast spells or even flee when combat occurs. A word of warning here, be careful, when in combat, to make sure that the cursor is positioned accurately on the correct icon before clicking the mouse button to make a choice, as in many battles you won't get a second chance should you make a mistake. In the wilderness remember that each click also moves you on half an hour in game time, so plan your moves care fully. The 3D graphics are definitely impressive, even those on the unfinished ST version that we were sent are some of the best that I have ever seen in a game of this type, adding an extra dimension (if you'll pardon the pun) to games of this kind.

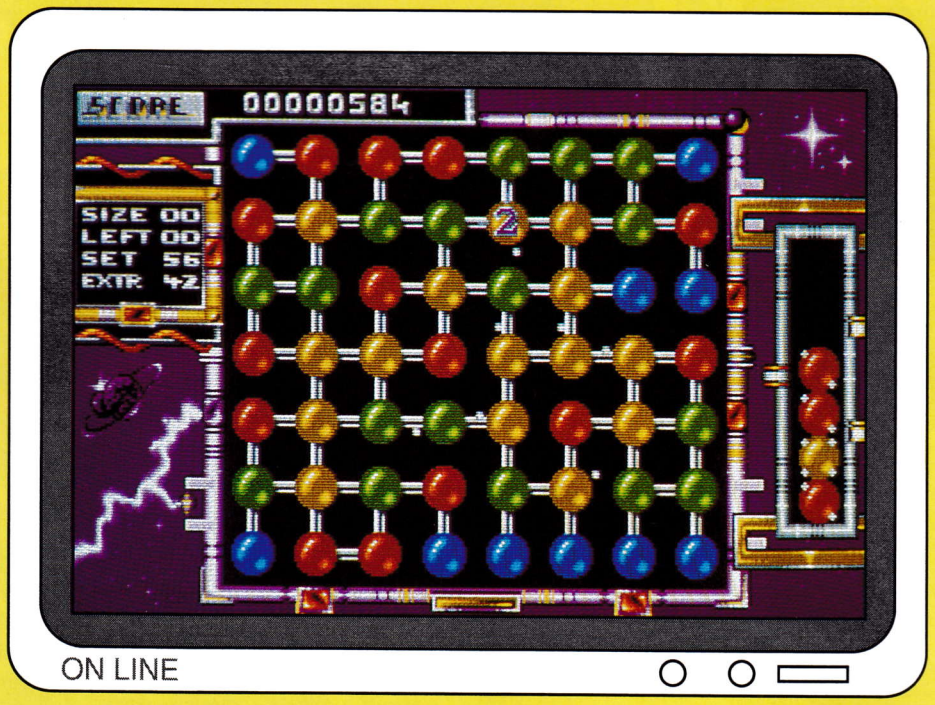


Luckily it is very hard for you to spoil the game completely, and even if your party dies you will still be able to get together a party from the 'stock list' that accompanies the refugees. You will even be able to get back characters that have just died, which seems a little unrealistic but considering the fairly high rate of attrition amongst party members it is justifiable.

Overall **Shadow Sorcerer** is probably the best in the SSI range of programmes in the **AD&D** series. Don't expect an easy romp through the wilderness and be prepared to take on a few minor quests along the way, such as saving the Sprite's Marsh Warden or retrieving royal jelly from giant bees. The graphics quality is excellent, and the 3D play areas make a nice change from bland and uninteresting 2D graphics. If you're into roleplaying computer style then Shadow Sorcerer will definitely be your cup of tea, if not give it a go anyway, you may be pleasantly surprised at what you discover. ♠

Review by Andrew Corby





Atomino
From Psygnosis
Formats: Atari ST, Amiga, PC
Price: ST, Amiga: £25.99

Home computers are generally used for business purposes, playing games, or for learning via educational programmes. There seems to be, at present, an incline by software houses to combine gameplaying and education, especially in the field of science and physics, so that we can be entertained and informed simultaneously.

Atomino is a game of puzzles that will expand your knowledge of atoms and molecules and, as the game progresses, commit you to quick thinking and dexterous on screen movement. The gameplay involves creating and completing molecules which are formed from atoms that you collect from the off-board play area called the "pit". These molecules are not complete until all possible connections have been made, but once each is completed it will be cancelled from the screen, showing you have been successful. Atoms connect together by "arms", known as free combinations, and each atom is represented by a coloured ball that has a number of the arms from 1 through 4.

By picking the atom up with the cursor you can release it only into a legal position on the play area, which is large enough to contain 56 atoms at any one time. Care must be taken to ensure placement is correct, as careless placement will result in enlarging the molecule but not completing it, thus wasting time in a game where you should be racing against the clock. Some atoms can be exchanged with the next in line out of the pit making it possible to repair damage that you may have caused by accidental placement. However if any atom was on screen at the beginning of the game it cannot be moved or replaced, so ensure you remember which atoms cam with the game and which you brought along.

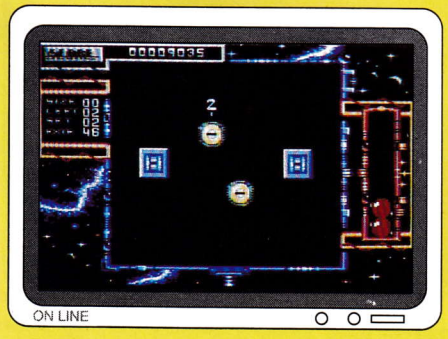
Only six atoms are allowed in the pit, and thes fall in at irregular intervals which makes for you time limit. You must keep the game running b ensuring that you place the atoms efficiently, wit speed and direction of thought. The status windo will determine what size of molecule you ar expected to complete, and if you are successful yo may gain an extra round where the whole board filled with atoms and you have as much time as yo require to construct a molecule. There is a catch however, for the screen continues into the next roun with all of the atoms that did not form your "extra molecule remaining on the play area. If you didn manage to construct a fairly large molecule then you gameplay will be considerably hindered, so patienc and planning are definitely required if you are to ge the better of this bonus.

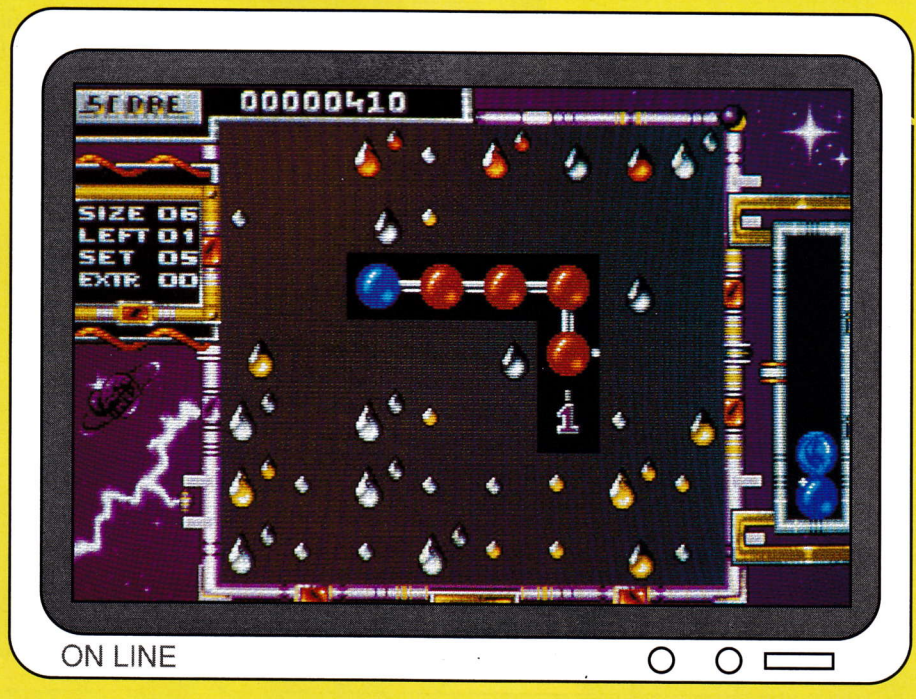
On screen prompts will generally tell you wha is expected of you in each round when you selec game mode A - the level oriented game. If yo choose mode B you are in a simple race against th clock where you have to build as many molecules a you can in a given amount of time.

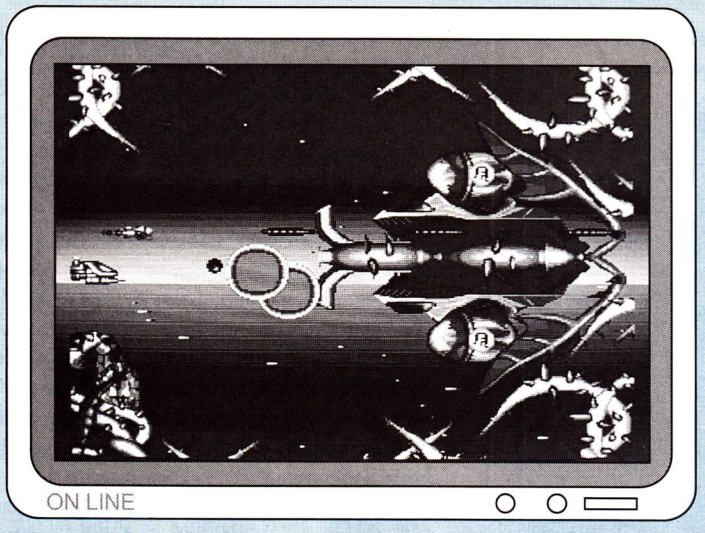
Atomino is one of those games that you wi either take to immediately or look at once and mov onto the next shoot 'em up. it is a game that wi cause you as much frustration as stress relaxatio since it appears to be so easy at first, but that is it hook. Once the game has got a hold of you it wi begin to eat away your time and consume your sanit as you push yourself towards success over the "sill coloured balls" that are not going to defeat you!

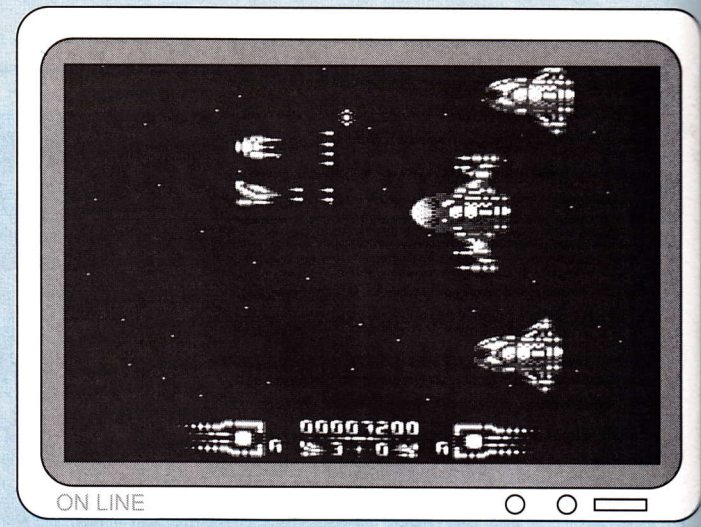
It is available on the Atari ST, the Amiga, an the PC so there is no reason for you not to be playin it, and there is no escaping it once it has caught yo with its direct simplicity, you will live it daily and will consume your every thought, until the end!

Review by C. Bayliss







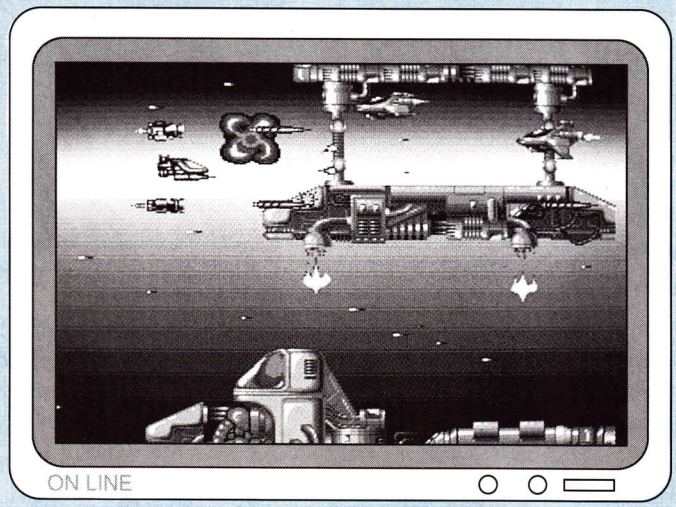


Armalyte - the Final Run
from Thalamus
Formats: ST, Amiga, C64
Price: £25.95

There isn't much one can say about this type of game that hasn't already been said, and written, several dozen times before about this style of game. Horizontally scrolling shoot 'em ups have been popular since the innovative *"Defender"* hyperspaced from the amusement arcade into our homes, and *Armalyte* is a suitably speedy and exciting addition to this ever-growing family of joystick manipulators.

As each "new" member of the family is unveiled by it's (parent) software company - most of the software houses have spawned at least one of these megadeath dealers - the background graphics and devices of destruction get more precise in quality of definition, and imagination, yet the game remains the same. For no other reason than mindless malevolence (lets face it, who reads the preamble and believes that they are on a mission of any kind?) you fly at super-speed towards the gaping cavernous jaws from which emit laser, phaser, and photon rays, any of which will blow your puny spaceship to countless smithereens.

Once inside the first opening, you have a choice of three passages, each as deadly as the next, and each showing you temptation in the form of blue globes which you know (from reading the rules) contain some kind of short term advantage, and all you have to do is shoot them whilst evading the myriad of flying space death that constantly whirls and swirls up, around, and in front of you.

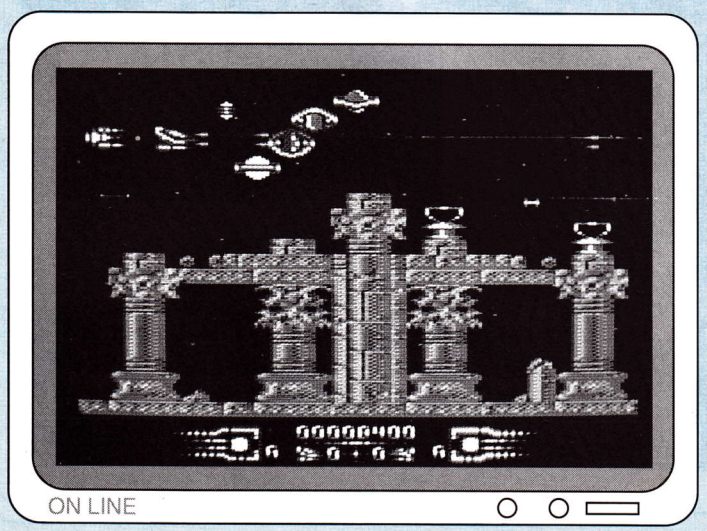


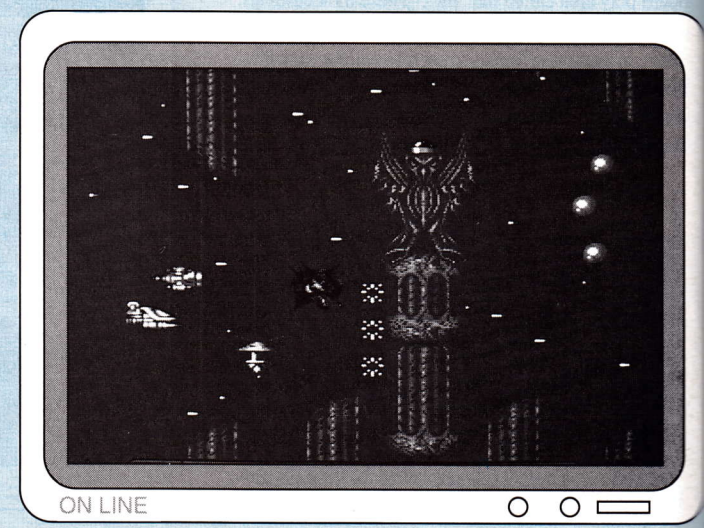
There are five levels to complete and each i devoted to one aim, your total destruction! You wi have to be extremely dexterous with the joystick t get through, and with only three lives per game, yo won't find success coming easy. One point worti noting is that when your first ships are destroyed yo begin at the start of the section that you were on, no right back at the beginning of the game but when your final ship is destroyed ther is an awfully long reloading sequenc before you can resume playing, this tend to deter continuous, long periods of play.

Armalyte does have a superb space musical score by Justin Sharvana which i very reminiscent of the great Jean Michelle Jarre at his best. This is on piece of computerised digital sound tha doesn't get on your nerves and you won mind hearing it time and time again which is good really considering th loading time.

If you are a collector of this type o game, or a devoted fan of arcade shoo 'em ups, it is an obvious purchase for you but if you already favour **Defender**, **R Type**, or any of the others akin to these, there reall is nothing exceptional in **Armalyte** that will mak you want to transfer your alliegance. ♠

Review by C. Bayliss





GAMES REVIEWS

This issue sees **Gamesman** revising it's marking system for games reviews. The guide here refers to the marks that are found at the end of each review. **STAY INFORMED.**

	Back to the Drawing Board	★★★	A Cut Above the Rest
★	In Need of Improvement	★★★★	Flawed Genius
★★	Sufficient	★★★★★	Unbeatable

Fair Means or Foul
Gibsons Games
2-5 Players
Price £14.95

In 1990, a German company, F.X. Shmid bought a new game onto the market designed by Klaus Teuber. The game was *Adel Verpflichtet* and it went on to win the 'Spiel des Jahres' or Game of the Year for 1990. For many years now the German game companies have been producing some very good and very playable games but they have not been taken up in this country and so they have appeared here only in very limited numbers, and then only in one or two game shops with export/import agreements with the continent. Happily this situation is finally beginning to change and one of this country's forward looking companies is starting to produce English versions of these games. The company is Gibsons Games, producers of *221B Baker Street, Brittania* and *Civilisation*, and the game in question is called *Fair Means or Foul.*

The object of **Fair Means or Foul** is to move your antique collection around the board as fast as you can whilst attempting to build up the largest collection possible, including such valuable items as *Andy Warhol's Glasses, Marilyn Munroe's Lipstick* and *Charlie Chaplin's Boots*, although to be fair there are six different groupings of antiques available including toys, pipes and chamber pots as well as film memorabilia. In addition each antique collector also employs a detective and two thieves, the thieves to liberate other collectors' antiques and the detective to prevent one's own collection from being stolen.

On opening the box, complete with visual cartoons on the lid, there is a foldaway four part board upon which is an outer track featuring twelve stately homes (where it is possible to stage exhibitions). Inside the outer track there are five sets of cells where unsuccessful thieves go to learn the error of their ways and two auctioneers, complete with till, five stately home playing pieces and two packs of cards. The first set of 45 cards is split up into 6 types of antiques while the second pack is made up of five sets colour coded for individual players, each player getting a set of ten cards to begin the game with. The last item in the box is a ten page A5 rule book which breaks the game up into 4 main stages explaining everything very well, it also includes tactical tips and special rules for two player games.

The set of ten colour coded cards that players begin the game with comprise of a stately home, an auction house card, a detective, two thieves, an exhibition card and four cheques (with a total value of £50,000). Each player is then dealt four antique cards which are kept hidden from other players. Now the way to win is to move your collection around the board, but in the joyful absence of dice there are only two methods of moving. The first is to hold an exhibition where your collection is the best, or second best, shown on that turn, or to catch other player's thieves when they try to steal an exhibit.

Each turn is made up of four phases wherein each player has a number of choices to make. The initial decision is whether to go to the auction house to bid for an antique or got to a stately home to hold an exhibition, catch thieves or 'liberate' other antiques. If you go to the auction house you must decide whether you will buy what is on offer, or play a thief to try and steal the winning cheque and use it later in the game to buy more for yourself, the only problem being that if two thieves are played they cancel each other out and the cheque goes into the till and is out of the game. Similar problems occur at stately homes, do you attempt top win the round by showing the biggest collection and risk having items stolen? Do you try to steal items from other exhibitors knowing that if a detective is played that the thief is then out of action for a turn? Or do you use your detective to catch any lurking thieves knowing that if none appear you have in fact wasted a turn? It gets most frustrating when you play a thief hoping that there is at least one exhibition in progress, only to find that everyone thought the same thing and played thieves, or even worse a detective card and suddenly the jail is full.

As you can see, the fundamental idea of **Fair Means or Foul** is bluff, it also helps to try and keep an idea of where other peoples thieves are, who has played all their cheque cards and not stolen others (so that you know whether to bid for crucial items or play a thief card). Get to know your opponents and what they may do in a given situation, and when exhibiting try not to give your opponents an idea of the extent of your collection, always try to use the minimum size to win a turn.

To sum up, this is an excellent game of bluff and counterbluff which works well with four or five players, any less and there will always be one who automatically gets what they want. It is not a long game, lasting on average an hour to an hour and a half with every player involved all the way. The movement system is original, fair and works well, as does the game itself which blends player interaction, memory, bluff and husbanding of resources to a high degree. ♠

Complexity:	Low
Value for Money:	★★
Playability:	★★★★
Presentation:	★★★

Review by Geoff Kemp

SHOW CASE

DARK CONSPIRACY™

"The Horror Begins", or so we are le to believe in the introduction to *Dar Conspiracy*, Games Design Workshop game of terror set in a chaotic futur Earth where society has broken dow and governments have fallen.

Countries are more likely to be split up into loose groupings of states or republics, rather tha remaining as a whole, since times are hard an economic disintegration has occurred on a glob scale. Cities are, if anything, larger than they a today having turned into sprawling metroplexe The privileged few enjoy life in the centr 'Dreamlands' while those with low, or no incom are confined to life in the slums or 'anthills However, this economic and political chaos can n be put down to man's greed and ecologica mismanagement alone, for somehow an ancient an "unspeakable" evil has been unleashed on th Earth, "an evil which thrives on the anguish of billion tortured souls". The world is falling into th hands of this evil force and piece by piece mo land, urban and rural, becomes "Demonground inhabited by dark minions, demons, undead an foul and twisted humans corrupted by th awakened evil.

On the whole humanity remains blissfull unaware of the danger that threatens them, and th players take the role of members of various la enforcement agencies that seek to combat thi menace, or are simply seemingly norma individuals that have been caught up in events surviving an attack by dark minions or stumblin into Demonground by accident. No-body is safe for evil takes many forms in this future worl where Vampires, Werewolves, Trolls an Darkelves roam; Spectres haunt and aliens creat bio-computers from the brains of missing humans.

The game has the feel of a **Cyberpunk Cthulhu** crossover, although the only cyberwea that appears comes in the form of 'alien' bio-computers and cyborg 'escapees', creating a game world that lacks a little in originality but which gives you plenty of material to work on. Players o other GDW games like **Megatraveller** or **Twilight 2000** will already be familiar with the basic game mechanics of **Dark Conspiracy**. Character generation is based around seven basic attributes split up into three groups, physical, mental and spiritual and skills are gained through working in various professions: anything from athletes and environmentalists to naval officers or even prisoners. Serving one or more four year terms to accrue skills, equipment and money. Weapon damage and penetrative power is also worked ou in the same way as other GDW games, matching a weapons penetrative abilities against the protection offered by your opponents armour, that is assuming of course that you hit. Tasks are resolved by rolling against your skill level on a D10; if you try to accomplish difficult tasks you may well have to test against your skill at a fraction of its actual value. The 336 page book is made up of two sections: the players section containing the aforementioned character generation rules and all of the info that a player needs to know and a

referee's section detailing the Earth under siege by dark forces. Everything the referee may need to know about running a game in a **Dark Conspiracy** setting is adequately covered, including encounters, equipment listings, details on the evil that plagues the Earth and Darktech (the technology exclusive to the 'alien' menace). Even the relatively primitive space travelling techniques of man are covered in some depth, allowing you to set your sights further than mere Earthly horizons. Referees are guided through most aspects of the game world and even the most inexperienced referee should have no problem with the game mechanics. A small adventures section is provided to start your **Dark Conspiracy** campaign off, with a non-to-lengthy adventure entitled "Ravening Wolves", featuring a few classical creatures, and continuing with some adventure ideas that you should be able to flesh out yourself. Don't worry if you're new to role playing either as hints and tips throughout the book will guide you on your journey into this fulfilling hobby. Quick reference tables and character sheets are kept together in a section at the back of the book making life much easier for both referee and players alike. **Dark Conspiracy** also contains an in-depth index that all to often seems to be missing in recent game products; It makes

"Don't worry if your're new to role playing either as hints and tips throughout the book will guide you on your journey into this fulfilling hobby ..."

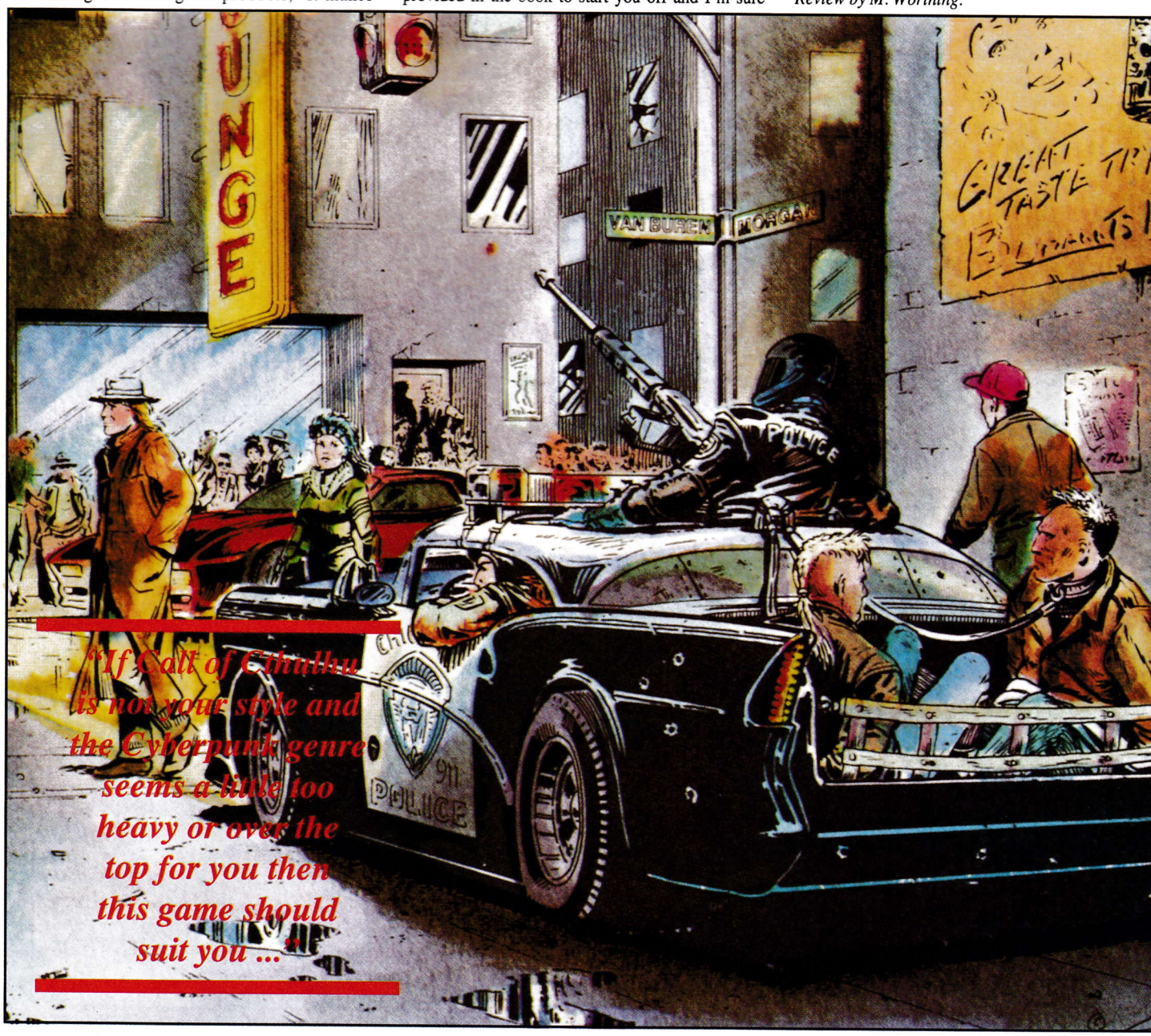
referencing items particularly easy and speeds up game play for both new players and veterans alike.

Overall I would say that **Dark Conspiracy** is very good value for money. It is well produced and presented and quite playable; what it lacks in originality can, in part, be made up for by the fact that it costs only sixteen pounds for a decently sized game book with a fairly complete game world laid out. An overview of "Dark Earth" America is provided in the book to start you off and I'm sure that sourcebooks and scenarios by the dozen wi soon follow. This is one dark future that's wort looking into. If **Call of Cthulhu** is not your styl and the cyberpunk genre seems a little too heavy c over the top for you then this game should suit you striking a happy balance between ancient horror and future terrors. If you're already a GDW game you'll love **Dark Conspiracy**; the system will b familiar, only the background has been changed t protect the innocent. If you fancy something nev or are looking for a new system to try out you coul do a lot worse than picking up this game at you local hobby store.

Remember when your worst nightmares com to life, when your empathic awareness seems to b rising, when alien visitors reach out bent o conquest and when large tracts of land become fou and twisted expanses of Demonground you'll know that the Dark Conspiracy has begun. ♠

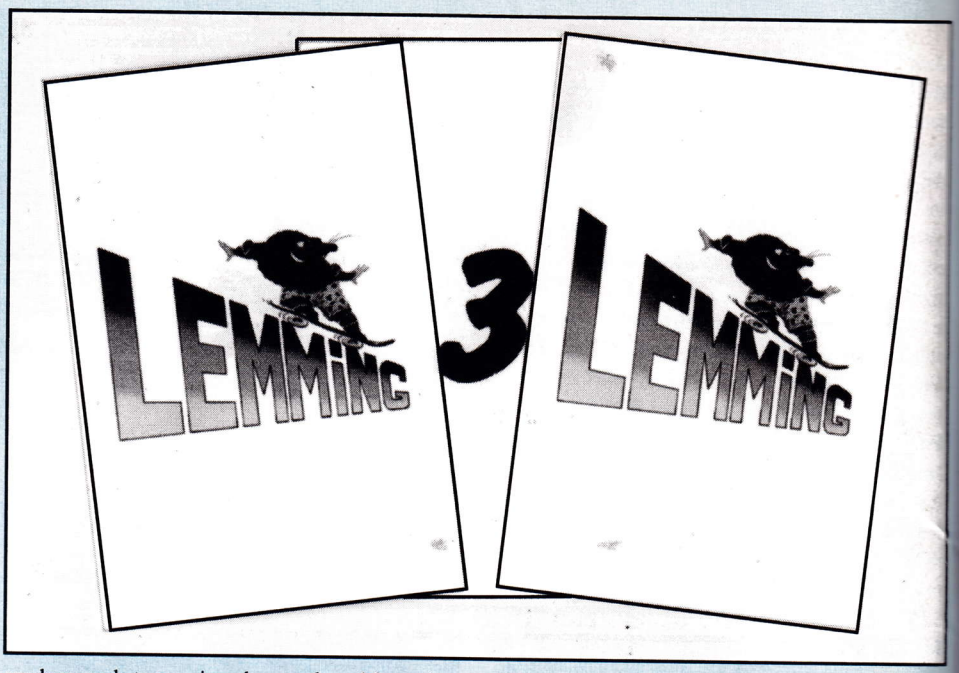
Complexity:	Medium
Value for Money:	★★★
Presentation:	★★★
Playability:	★★★

Review by M. Worthing.



"If Call of Cthulhu is not your style and the Cyberpunk genre seems a little too heavy or over the top for you then this game should suit you ..."

Lemmings
Spielfrieks
2-4 Players
Price £10.00



Spielfrieks, a company trying to bring unknown games and old favourites that are out of print to a new audience by producing limited runs have now released there second offering upon the games world.

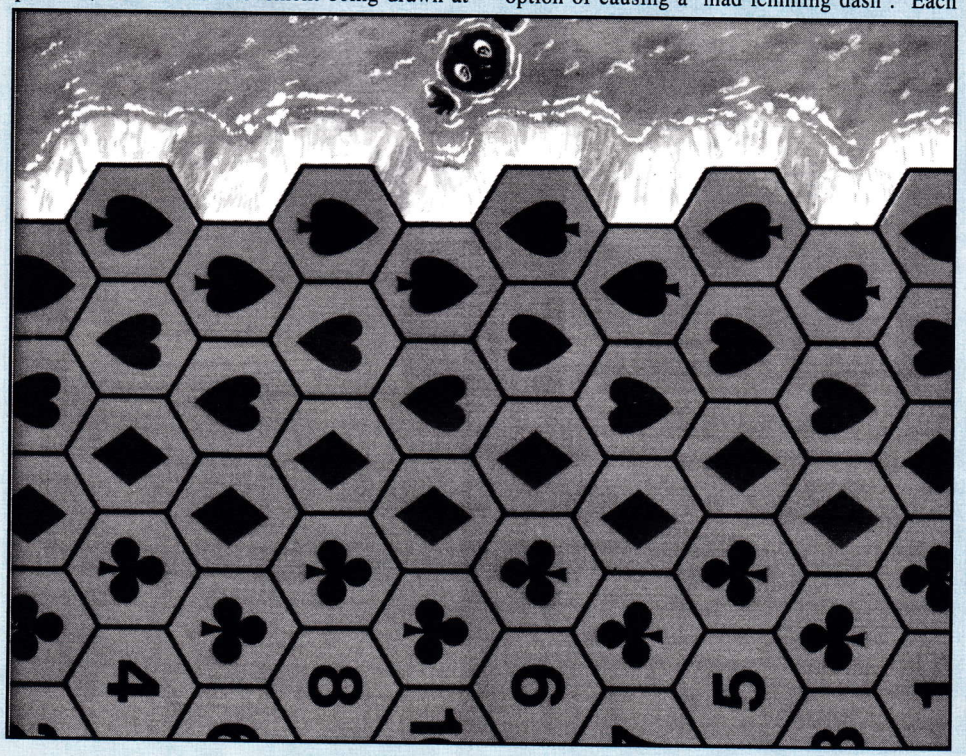
There first release Family Business proved so successful that its original producers bought back the license, rereleased it themselves and found it to be a hit all over again. This time Spielfrieks have picked up on **Lemmings** a game not widely known or played at present, but which, once it becomes readily available, will I am sure, become a popular game with players of all ages.

Upon opening the fairly plain box, adorned only the game's title down which skateboards a lemming wearing boxer shorts, dark glasses and an insane grin, you will find a board with start at one end and a cliff at the other (at the foot of which is a lemming in the water, probably our skateboarder) in between are hexes marked either with numbers or card suits (hearts, diamonds etc.). A pack of 'ordinary' playing cards, 12 lemming cards, 12 oval lemming counters and two pieces of paper, the papers being a two sided A4 rules sheet and a sheet listing and illustrating possible 'nudges'.

Each player starts with an equal number of lemmings and the object of the game is simple, to ensure that after an agreed number of games you have the highest score, and to get the high score it is essential to make sure that your lemming(s) is not the first over the cliff, the first over gains only one point while the twelfth lemming gets fifteen points. (We found that one game per person playing worked out well since this evened out the luck element, and a series of four games will take about an hour and a half to complete without rushing things).

During the game each lemming will move once per turn, the order of movement being drawn at random each turn using the numbered lemming cards, each player is also dealt three court (picture) cards and three ordinary playing cards. Aha! I hear you cry, what's to stop the first lemming that moves from being the first over the cliff, well this is where the symbols on the board and the pack of playing cards come in. Each time a lemming moves there are the additional options of blocking and nudging, together with the possibility at the end of each full turn of a mad lemming dash. By using one of the cards that you have been dealt, one that matches a hex number ahead of your lemming, you can be blocked, deflecting you at an angle so that you do not finish so far down the board. Even better however, on your move you can naturally, or by blocking and thus deflecting yourself, collide with another players lemming, you immediately stop and the lemming that you hit is forced to travel an equivalent number of hexes to those that you had already moved. If this second lemming then hits a third its movement is passed on and so on ad infinitum.

At the end of each round every player has the option of causing a 'mad lemming dash'. Each player plays one of their six cards, playing a court card indicates that a dash is wanted, only unmatched court cards are successful, others being returned to the hand. Players who succeed in playing a dash have the option of moving any lemming on the board so long as they have the card that corresponds to the hex that a particular lemming is on. The lemming thus affected will move 4 hexes unless it hits a second lemming which will again move 4 hexes unless it hits another and so on. This is an ideal opportunity to arrange for one or more of your opponent's lemmings to go over the edge.



In all this game has stood up well to repeated playing by people of all age groups, and the practice of playing one game per player usually means that the winner is not found until the end of the final game. The rules state that the game is ideal for 2-4 players however it can be played successfully by any number up to 12 providing that additional packs of cards can be found. Obviously with more than six players each will control only one lemming. There is scope for plenty of interaction and usually one player's move will effect at least one other lemming, so it is easy to remain glued to the board.

The rules are fairly straight forward and self explanatory presenting no problems. An extremely useful item is the sheet illustrating the various nudges when hitting other lemmings as well as the best way to use blocks, if you control more than one lemming there are cases when it is to your advantage to nudge one of your own lemmings. Whereas the lemming cards and pieces are well presented the pack of ordinary cards is a disappointment, however this obviously helps to keep the game's price at a very reasonable level. The biggest drawback to **Lemmings** is that it is not being stocked by the big multiples, only being available from specialist game shops or Spielfrieks themselves. This is a pity because it is an excellent game that deserves a much wider audience. ♠

Complexity:	Low
Value for Money:	★★★
Playability:	★★★★
Presentation:	★★

Review by Geoff Kemp.

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Dark Sun
Designed by Troy Denning & Timothy B. Brown
Produced by TSR
Price: £11.99

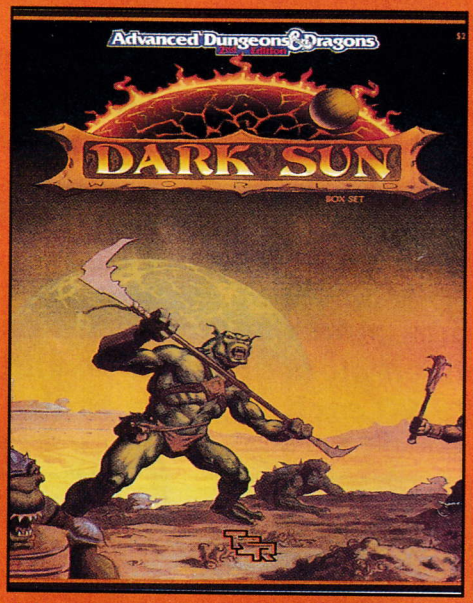
***Dark Sun* is the latest in a series of boxed sets designed specifically to give *AD&D 2nd Edition* characters a higher degree of useful, informative, and personal background knowledge, thus making them initially a greater challenge for the players and eventually a more powerful persona than randomly generated characters who are just deemed to appear in whatever "world" the DM has set a campaign.**

The land of *Athas* is mostly barren and dusty, but alive with despicable humanoids and warped, hideous creations (natural phenomena). It's daylight hours are spent under a relentlessly burning sun that has forced many of the inhabitants to scavenge in conditions that the lowly beggars of other **AD&D** worlds would find unacceptable. Complimenting the desolation caused by the sun is an even greater destruction, actioned by the Sorcerer-Kings who rule over the cities that still stand amidst the desolate lands of a once beautiful and bountiful panorama.

Your introduction to the world of *Athas* comes from an unnamed traveller who has wandered over much of the land and through many of its cities, for the text is in first person singular and written as pages in a wanderers journal. Through his eyes we get to see the life that our characters can expect to live, and the way that we, as players, must adapt our natural gaming tendencies to get the flavour of Athas flowing through our, and through us our character's, veins. The Dark Sun setting is not one where the sword or the battleaxe can always be relied on to get you by, for virtually everyone in Athas has latent psionic abilities, which, thankfully, remain latent in the majority of humans and demi-humans encountered. Only the Sorcerer Kings and a few of their hand-picked minions actively operate their psionic powers and anyone else caught using them is generally banished (and then killed) or killed outright. This rule of banishment and death applies also to those of the Veiled Alliance, a number of secret societies opposed to the Sorcerer Kings, when members break the rule of preservation.

Magic is an important aspect of survival in Athas and can be separated into two main fields - Clerical Magic and Wizardry. Clerics of Athas worship one of the four elemental forces - Earth, Air, Water or Fire - rather than any named gods or images. Those who follow the path destined by the element water are the most influential as Athas is a dry place and needs all of the spiritual help it can get, but each is powerful and necessary, and has devoted followers amongst the varied races that inhabit the land. Druids are referred to as clerics of nature, though their work is quite closely aligned to the magic using wizards known as preservers, in as much as they both look to the long term continuation and preservation of Athas rather than their own short term survival.

Wizards draw their magical powers from the earth and their surroundings and therefore constantly remove some of the world's life forces. Preservers apply their knowledge and much of their free time into rekindling these lost forces through mystical rituals and secret arts passed on through the ages. Most Sorcerer-Kings are defilers who have found ways of living far longer than any mortal man could conceivably believe, and care little for the well being and upkeep of the land, being concerned only with their own paradisical domains. Many of these kings live in marble towers or castles and have their cities surrounded by walls and guards. Free movement between cities is frowned upon, but very few of these rulers would stop trading merchants from coming and going as they please, since this would cause a knock-on effect amongst the commercial travellers and bring trade to a halt altogether, thereby affecting the luxurious lifestyle that they enjoy. Each Sorcerer King has a bureaucracy composed of Templars,



clerics supposedly devoted to the king. The king can channel off some of his magical force and allow them to cast spells. In return for these favours the Templars manage the estates and deal with minor uprisings and complaints, by fair means or foul - usually foul - before they come to the attention of the king.

Away from the cities there Are numerous villages which, more often than not, are the target of nomadic marauders and wild animals (when thirst or hunger overtakes their adversaries need for caution. Villages are usually encampments near to a water supply where communal farming on a small scale is possible. The large part of all farming is under the control of powerful overlords who use slave labour to keep produce available for the myriad of merchant caravans prepared to take it to the markets of Athas. The Templars regard these villages as fair game for enforcing the existing edicts of their king. Cruel and evil punishments are handed out, and it is not unusual for whole villages to pack up and move on almost overnight, either just after or just before a visit from the Templars.

Dark Sun contains enough written material for the DM to run long campaigns, especially those involving the exploration of the multitude of ruined buildings that are to be found in the Tablelands, an impressively large area encompassing many different types of terrain and which borders upon the equally impressive Sea of Silt (120,000 square miles of wind blown sinking sands), and the less than cheery Ringing Mountain Range. Beyond Athas lie the Hinterlands, though the average citizen is knows nothing of this area because only one person - our traveller friend - has ever returned from a ventu past the confirmed Athas borders, and he ou travelled a short distance before turning back (as why he turned back well, I shall leave that up to DM to discover and pass on the information as a when required).

With all of this descriptive text at your fingert there is no reason for your **Dark Sun** campaign to anything other than adventurous and exciting, thou how you would introduce your players favour characters to this setting needs careful a constructive thinking. Even designing ne characters especially for the world of Athas crea problems in as much as the practice of magic, oth than in the employment of a Sorcerer King, forbidden under pain of death, and anyone found be handy with a weapon (should you be luc enough to obtain or own such a luxury) would n escape the King's notice, or that of his Templars, f long enough to have gained sufficient levels experience as to be able to fight back successfully.

It seems quite obvious from the style that t journal is written in that player characters a supposed to join one or more of the secret societi within the Veiled Alliance at some time in their live with the formidable task of deposing a ruli Sorcerer King as a long term priority. The gam setting also seems to have been devised with t added intention of reintroducing the skills an powers of psionics back into the **AD&D** gam system. This will allow players with high lev psionically endowed characters to use them to fi advantage against opponents fully equipped to de with them and who can give as good, if not bett than they receive.

Dark Sun has been designed by Troy Denni and Timothy B. Brown, both of whom are expect as TSR Ltd.'s guests of honour at European GE CON'91, Pontins Holiday Centre, Camber sand Sussex, on the weekend of November 15th - 17t and who will, hopefully, be giving seminars on the project and running participatory introductory gam to the **Dark Sun** setting. This will give players chance to meet, and be eaten by some of the ne monsters created especially for the world of Atha such as the insect like *Gaj*, or the chitinous shell Silk Worm, and to gain first hand knowledge of th American style of refereeing which is, in itself, a experience that all European **AD&D** players shou grasp at the chance to undergo.

This boxed set will open a whole new outlo on **AD&D2** for those players with the patience accept the rules changes afforded by this new worl It is sufficiently different from any of the other rece boxed sets TSR have released to be influential changing players attitudes to the game giving th system a completely new direction in which to aim My only minor quibble, and I am not saying that could do better, is that as the text content becom more impressive, the art work which adorns it, in th case the majority of Brom's drawings, becomes le professional. Overall though, I was enamoured b the imagination and invention of **Dark Sun** and loo forward to many hours putting my players an characters through it...literally!

Complexity:	Medium
Value for Money:	★★★★
Playability:	★★★
Presentation:	★★

Review by C. Bayliss

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs

Produced by

Priced approx. £10.00

This game is based on Mark Shultz's comic Cadillacs & Dinosaurs. It first appeared in the mid to late 80's as part of an anthology titled "Death Rattle", produced by Kitchen Sink Press, as "Xenozoaic Tales". KSP quickly followed up with "Xenozoiac Tales" the black & white comic. Proving to be very popular, the rights were bought by Marvel who later went on to produce the now familiar "Cadillacs & Dinosaurs" (in colour) as part of the Epic line.

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs produced by GDW provides an unusual and interesting avenue for role-playing. The back-ground goes something like this. Early in the 21st century, humankind is forced to retreat into vast subterranean shelters in order to escape a geologic and ecological disaster that threatens to destroy all life on Earth. Billions died in the ensuing hysteria. However, humans weren't the only ones to suffer. Entire animal and plant species were wiped out while the surviving humans huddled in their steel tombs...and waited. Over 450 years later the descendants of the survivors emerged, and were greeted by a radically different world; a world were creatures from Earth's distant past ruled supreme.

Simplicity is the name of the game. Character generation could not be easier. All characters begin at age 17; the player decides on a profession (there are 14 to choose from) and rolls 3d6 in order to determine how long is spent in that job. There doesn't seem to be any advantage to being in a given profession for a long time, as all the skills and skill bonuses are set. Characteristics, of which there are six (Strength, Constitution, Agility, Education, Intelligence and Charisma) are all rolled on 2D6-2, with 0 being re-rolled. Resolving tasks is achieved by rolling 1D10. Getting under or equal to the skill means that the character has been successful, with difficulty modifiers to give an added dimension of realism. The task resolution is by no means rigid, allowing the referee to set task rolls set against appropriate characteristics instead of just skills. The skill list isn't exactly exhaustive, so it might be necessary for you to create your own. The character sheet is poorly designed so again it might be a good idea for you to put your own together.

The equipment list is quite full, giving you enough to get along with, but fails to give a feel for the game, giving very little information specialised equipment. There's a large "Referee's" section that gives plenty of useful advice for novices and also recaps on task resolution and gives skill descriptions and how to advance in level, however, most of this section will be totally useless to anyone who has role-played before. There is a nice piece on Time & Travel, that gives all the gen on how to get about, hunting fatigue and so on. Not enormously useful, but it does help build up a feeling for the game world.

The Combat chapter is excellent, containing all information necessary to run accurate combat, of all types, including vehicle combat. The combat system was surprisingly fast and simple; surprising because it's quite realistic, unusual for this type of epic game.

A reasonable number of animals are detailed. Needless to say most of them are huge reptiles, all being illustrated some of them in colour. The Known World section is just brimming with scenario ideas. With a detailed and properly explained map (which makes a change), plenty of quality artwork and NPC descriptions, this section will probably be of most use to older gamers amongst you.

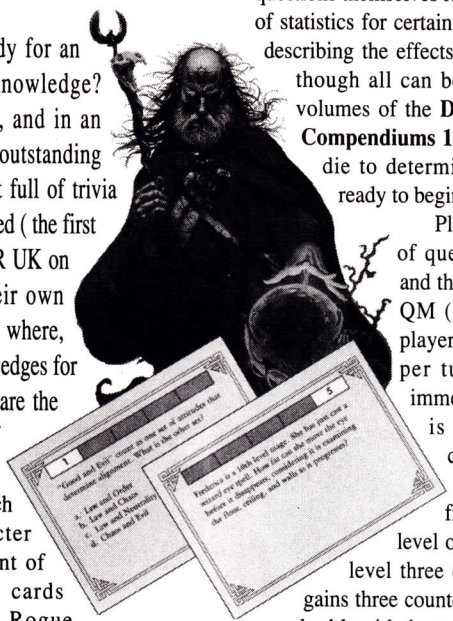
There is an adventure at the back of the book that isn't really much cop, but run it anyway, it's a nice introduction and should be enjoyed by most people. There isn't much support for this game, which is a shame really, because it's so unusual, so different that I found it made a very refreshing change. I wouldn't recommend this product to any new referees, however, if you fancy something different, and topical, then this is a must. You might consider buying the comics if you can find them, they will really help to get you wanting to get out there and smegg dinos.

Complexity :	Medium
Value for Money:	★★★★
Playability:	★★★
Presentation :	★★★★

Review by Alistair Hemming.

Advanced Dungeons and Dragons (2nd Edition) Trivia Game

TSR, Inc.: Price £19.99, 3 or more players, Ages 10 and up



Are role-play gamers ready for an attack on their gaming knowledge? TSR apparently think so, and in an attempt to cash in on the outstanding success shared by a market full of trivia games, they have just released (the first UK shipment arrived at TSR UK on Monday August 5th) their own version of **Trivial Pursuit** where, instead of collecting pizza wedges for correct answers, the prizes are the possible annihilation of your opponents.

Instead of a board, each player chooses a character card and places it in front of them. There are ten cards depicting two each of Rogue, Monster, Wizard, Priest, and Warrior, with each 'pair' showing different artwork gleaned from various TSR products.

Once each player has chosen a character (there can be up to ten players or teams) the sixty skull marker counters are placed in the box lid and thoroughly shuffled. The question cards are neatly stacked in their own box with dividers provided to keep the varying levels of questions - from level one (easy) through to level five ("I know my **AD&D2** inside out and backwards") - separated, and placed in a position of easy reach. The questions themselves range from regular knowledge of statistics for certain races, classes, and levels, to describing the effects of spells, wands, or scrolls, though all can be found in the 2nd Edition volumes of the **DMG**, **PHB**, and **Monstrous Compendiums 1** and **2**. Roll a coin or toss a die to determine who starts and you are ready to begin.

Players can choose which level of question they wish to answer and the person to their right acts as QM (Question Master). Each player is only asked one question per turn with play passing on immediately if the answer given is wrong. If the answer is correct, then the player takes an number of skull counters from the box lid equal to the level of question answered. (i.e. a level three question answered correctly gains three counters, etc.) The skull counters are double-sided, one side depicts a skull (as would be expected)whilst the other side clearly denotes one of the five character classes. Removing the level number of counters one at a time, the player who answered correctly can use them to injure one of his/her opponents or heal an injury on him/herself.

By checking the opposite side to the skull you determine the character class on the counter. If you have already suffered an injury, you may remove one injury counter for every counter gained that shows your character class. If the character class shown is that of an opponent, you may injure him/her by placing the counter, skull side up, on their character card. When a character receives his/her sixth injury (i.e. has six counters on his/her card) they are killed and out of the game. Play continues until only one player remains alive, and they are the winner.

This game will lend itself well to gaming conventions and non-serious gaming sessions, especially early evening after a particularly heavy or long campaign slot, but unless TSR quickly follow it up with more questions (there are only 600 in this set) its popularity will wane faster than a fifth level thief can appear at your side when you open the coin-filled treasure chest.

Obviously some knowledge of the **AD&D 2nd Edition** rules is required as there are no general gaming questions, but whether you are adept or apathetic you can still enjoy the game as the fun is actually not what you DO know, but what you THOUGHT you knew ... and DIDN'T.

Complexity:	Low
Value for Money:	★★
Presentation:	★★
Playability:	★★

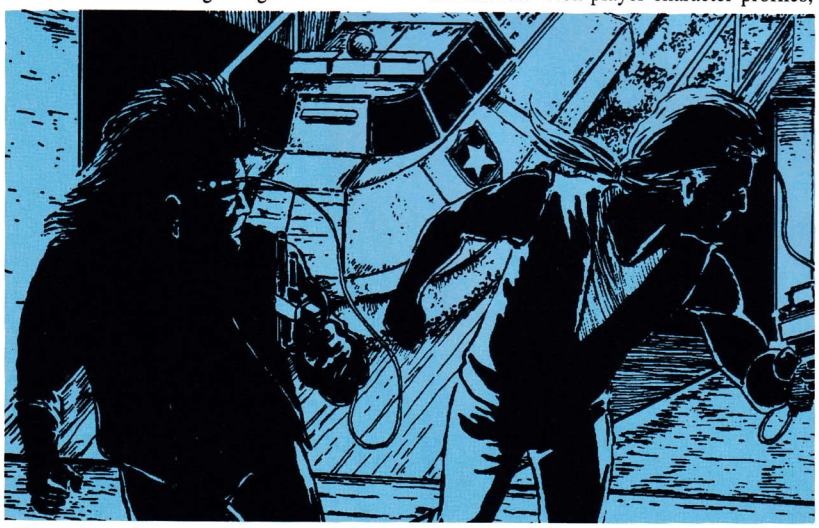
Review by Chris Baylis

Rotten to the Core

Scenario for 2300AD
Produced by GDW
Priced approx. £7

Rotten to the Core is an adventure for 4 - 6 characters of moderate skill. It is based in a town called Libreville (literally Freetown) and revolves around a shady deal offered to the PC's by an old acquaintance of their's, Jean-Francois Assele, who invites them to his place of work, the Trilon Corporation offices, where he is in middle management. It seems that Jean-Francois had managed to get hold of some pretty radical tech and feels that, with the PC's help, it can be sold and everyone will become rich.

There is a problem, however, in that the friend is killed almost before he has a chance to give the PC's an account of what's going on. This causes obvious problems for the PC's, Jean-Francois' bio-meter alerting the building security to the the fact that the poor sap just bit the big one! From then on the PC's have to find out what the tech objects actually does and follow up on clues they may, or may not, have picked up while being chased by the cops. The scenario is fast and furious and is reminiscent of old Traveller adventures. Non-player character profiles, detailed decriptions, in-depth information on the Trilon Building computer network & floor plans, as well as a very full chronology make this adventure completely ready to run. Being very well designed, the scenario manages to give the players the impression that they have a free reign when, in fact, they are being manipulated by the ref. There is nothing wrong with being lead. The adventure works very well and is enormous fun. However, I wouldn't reccomend you buy this product on the strength of the adventure alone as, after all, it's just an adventure.



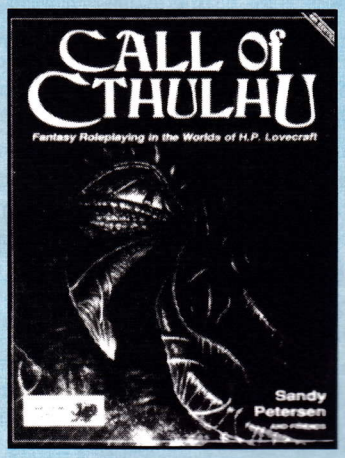
What this book is worth buying for is the first 41 of the 63 pages give the low-down on Libreville itself. Unfortunately I haven't got enough space with which to detail the this part of the book. Needless to say, GDW have kept up their high standards and produced a complete and ready to run environment for your players. Nothing has been left out. Maps of the various sectors of the town, with tables, explanations and just about anything else you'd care to think of, has been included. This is one of the best GDW products to appear on the market for some time and I have no hesitation in recommending it.

Complexity:	Low
Value for Money:	★★★
Presentation:	★★★★
Playability:	★★★★

Review by Alistair Hemming.

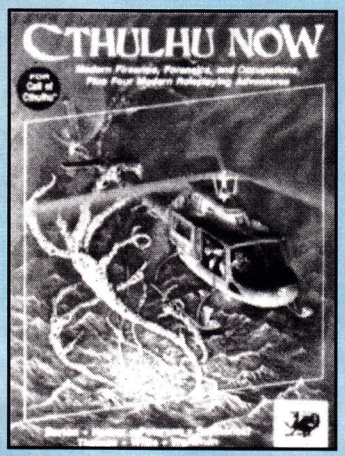
Call of Cthulhu

Call of Cthulhu, Chaosium's classic horror RPG, is the subject of this page of reviewlets, the game and four associated products come under scrutiny in this playback.



Call of Cthulhu (4th. Edition).
Chaosium Inc.: £12.99

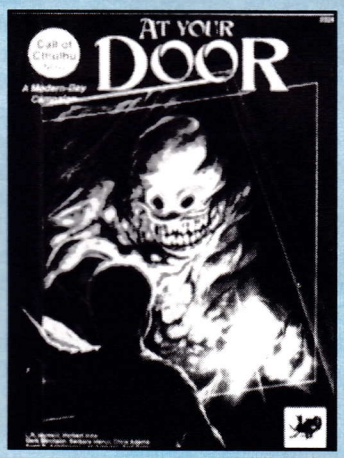
The 192 pages of **Call of Cthulhu** will have you and your players on the edges of their seats, and if you are new to rolegaming join the many players that have gone before as the Mythos grips you and transports you to a world in which terror dogs your every step. **Call of Cthulhu** covers the game itself, provides ready to play scenarios and a 1920's sourcebook to allow you to flesh out your own 20's campaign settings. The Cthulhu system has remained basically unchanged even though it has seen four separate editions, however the quality of the game's production has increased every time. **Call of Cthulhu** is an amazing system that will have your players quivering with fear at the very thought of what you might throw at them next, it's one of the best horror RPG's around, a real classic.



Cthulhu Now
Chaosium Inc.: £12.99

Cthulhu Now updates the original 1920's Call of Cthulhu allowing you as referees and players to set campaigns in the 90's. If you think that the games originality or flavour will suffer because of this you are sadly mistaken **Cthulhu Now** is as atmospheric and playable as a game in any 20's setting.

This supplement updates the game well answering many questions on the new setting and including updated professions and equipment lists. Besides updating the standard rules it contains many optional bits and pieces that you may want to use to enhance your campaign. Four fairly decent 'modern day' scenarios round off the package nicely and overall the only thing to say is that **Cthulhu Now** is another good buy for **C-o-C** players.



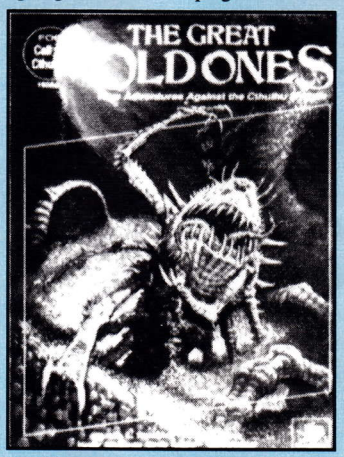
At Your Door
Chaosium Inc.: £12.99

For use with Cthulhu Now.

The first of the **Cthulhu Now** campaigns and definitely worth getting. The 174 page book contains a campaign in six parts that works well, and includes amongst other things player handouts that cover the use of video cameras.

Although updated the scenarios loses none of the atmosphere that accompanied Lovecraft's original works, and the campaign, on the whole works well running very smoothly.

NB: It is vital that you own **Cthulhu Now** if you are going to run this campaign!



	C-o-C
Complexity:	Medium
Value for Money:	★★★
Presentation:	★★★★
Playability:	★★★★

	Great Old Ones
Complexity:	Medium
Value for Money:	★★★
Presentation:	★★★★
Playability:	★★★★

The Great Old Ones
Chaosium Inc.: £12.99

for C-o-C 1920's

176 pages contain six adventures in this well presented title. **The Great Old Ones** is probably one of the best set of scenarios that i have seen for the **C-o-C** game and well worth the money. The best of the bunch has to be Marcus L. Rowland's Bad Moon Rising, although Tell Me Have You Seen The Yellow Sign? by Kevin A. Ross comes a close second. Thoroughly recommended.

Miskatonic University Graduate Kit
Chaosium Inc.: £7.99

Want a Diploma in Mediaeval Metaphysics, a Miskatonic window sticker or a Miskatonic University I.D card then you'll probably want the Grad. Kit. I must say though that this is one very 'American' idea that doesn't appeal to me at all, its the RPG equivalent of exploitative merchandising and it was a definite disappointment to find out that Chaosium had hit upon this idea. Use the Campus maps, letter headed paper etc. to enhance your campaigns if you must but who needs the rest of the gumf in the pack. It may be graduation day at the world's scariest university for some but definitely not for me.

Reviews by J.P. Bayley and Robin Glen.

	Cthulhu Now	At Your Door	Graduation Kit
	Medium	Medium	Low
	★★★	★★★	★
	★★★	★★★	★★
	★★★★	★★★★	N/A

Lycanthrope Source Book
Designed by Geoff Pass.
Produced by Mayfair Games Inc.
Priced £7.95

Geoff Pass spent over eight months solidly researching this book for Mayfair and the hard work really shows through.

The first 19 pages are given over to a section entitled "The Werewolf in Folklore" that gives the history of the werewolf through history and gives examples and stories from myriad unconnected cultures. You're left, having read this section, not really knowing whether to believe in werewolves or not. I have to admit that I wasn't aware of the massive volume of evidence to support the case for the existence of werewolves. The author backs up his arguments with actual case histories, a fact that he is eager for you to note.

Once you get past this section and into the source book proper you should be in the right frame of mind to be able to cope with this mind bending subject. The next section, "Overview", takes the form of a SAVE file from the project "Lycos" headed by Dr. K. Anders. Separated in to Lycanthropic Disorder, Infective Lycanthropy, Inherent Lycanthropy, Magical Lycanthropy and Astral Lycanthropy (each with a case history), the Overview gives more than enough information on every aspect of lycanthropy for you to feel confident in your knowledge. These sections are further sub-divided to give a deeper insight into other aspects of these near human creatures. Nothing has been left out: physiology, forms, psychology, ecology to name but a few, as well as how to kill or even cure the lycanthrope build up frightening picture as the extent of the lycanthrope menace is uncovered. Geoff has decided to cover Wolfen in the Overview. I'm not really sure why he has included them since they differ very little from your everyday "Hammer" werewolf, in that they keep themselves to themselves, and only change into wolf form when the full moon shines. A bit of a waste of space that could have been given over to the last major section, the scenarios. Next we are told about The Den, HQ for the "Lycos" project. With a detailed and well drawn map, information on security & admin and stats on personnel, this gives an excellent base from which to run the game. The CM's section, chapter 4, lists all the various types of lycanthropy with scenario suggestions. The fact that this is a product produced for the Chill system is really under emphasised, with this section just underlining the fact that this is really a general sourcebook masquerading as a Chill product.

The scenarios at the back of the book are a real bonus. The first scenario, The Beast of Exmoor, explores the modern legend that has grown up around the incidents of mutilated sheep carcasses and sightings of a creature on said moor. I won't give any details as this scenario needs to be run with the players preconceived ideas uppermost in their minds. A smooth, fast adventure, this scenario will have your players running around like headless chickens, fearing for their very lives. The second scenario, A Long Hot Summer, is set in Yellowstone National Park and possesses the same high standard of detail and artwork as the Beast of Exmoor, however, this adventure is just not as strong, with the referee having to put in a lot moor effort to make the scenario interesting enough to keep the players on their toes.

All in all, The Lycanthrope Sourcebook will make an excellent addition to anyone's collection of source material. Well researched, written and presented, this will be useful to any body intending to have these unpleasant beasties in a game.

Complexity Low
Value for Money ★★★★
Presentation ★★★★★
Playability ★★★★

Reviewed by Alistair Hemming

2300AD, Man's Battle for the Stars.
Produced by GDW
Priced: £13.99

Although 2300AD is only three years old, we've included it in the playback section because it seems to have been mostly forgotten about by gamers and industry alike. This is strange since it's been given the support you'd expect GDW to give. Source books, supplements and scenarios abound for this very well-rounded game. This review, however, will concentrate on the boxed set that contains everything you'll need to begin running 2300AD.

The game components consist of an Adventurers Guide, Directors Guide, a Near Star Map and a booklet of Play Aids. The 96 page Adventurers Guide has everything you'd expect to find in a players book: character generation, careers, skills, equipment, vehicles and of course weaponry. Even these standard sections differ from the norm in two major respects. Firstly, the page format is such that the far left and right margins have been increased in size to accommodate a running commentary to the main body of this text. This commentary includes additional rules, examples of rules working and extra background information. Secondly, there is a lot more space given over to character background. This has the effect of giving you a well-rounded character to start with, making 2300AD an excellent game for inexperienced role players. The Adventurers Guide also includes masses of info about the history of this future Earth. In fact, it's the historical and political set-up that puts this game head and shoulders above the rest. The game manages to give more of a "wild west" than a "Star Wars" feel, that is to say, man on the frontier. After a limited nuclear exchange in the early part of the 21st century (the setting of Twilight 2000 - reviewed in next issue), man has managed to claw his way back and beyond his previous technological level; spreading humanity through the stars, to a distance of over 50 light years, trading with six alien races and exploiting untold riches on countless new systems, this seems on the surface to be the golden age of man. However, all is not well in human space, or the human homeworld for that matter. Drug runners, alien invasions, piracy, espionage (both industrial and military) as well as your every day crimes, give the PC's more than enough to keep them in trouble up to their necks.

The Director's Guide has the same format as the Adventurer's Guide with its margins being given over to extra bits of info, explanations and examples. Everything from political make-up of Earth and her nations to generating new world designs are featured in this book. Well structured and detailed, the Director's book leaves nothing out. As you are probable aware, it's been common for some time now for companies to produce material, and box it, in the knowledge that you won't actually be able to run the game until you buy that all singing all dancing supplement. GDW haven't done that and this game is ready to run as it stands.

You also get a full colour, and very accurate, near star map that is invaluable if you intend to run anything in space, as well as a 32 page Aids Booklet that contains all the tables, diagrams and data you need for quick reference. The Aids Booklet also has a short solo adventure at the back which is fun and gives you a feel of what the game should be when played in the right spirit. I wouldn't bother playing the included scenario, Kafer Dawn, as this involves getting to grips with some pretty mean alien types and should probably be saved until your players have a bit more game experience.

All in all, 2300AD is an excellent sci-fi setting that will allow you free reign to do just about anything you you want, and run any type game. 2300AD is probably an excellent game with which to introduce fantasy gamers to sci-fi, being a full, detailed and simple system. ♠

Complexity	Low to Medium
Value for money	★★★
Presentation	★★★
Playability	★★★★

Review by Julie Chambers

Save the President!

Designed by Jack Jaffe
Produced by Games for Pleasure Ltd.
Priced £14.99

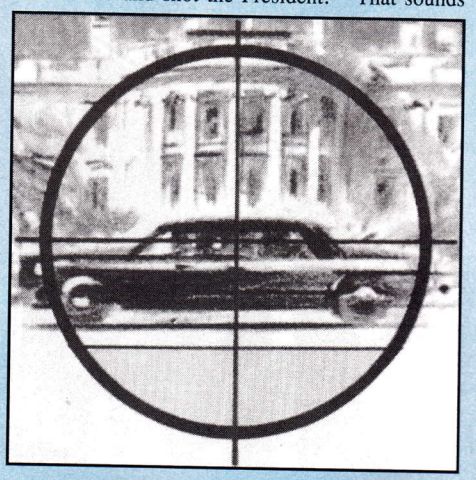
Save the President! is a board game focusing on the unlikely scenario of a mass assassination attempt upon the US President by KGB, CIA, GRU et al.

The President is on the way to his inauguration ceremony by car and the players take the part of "secret agents", either good guys or bad guys (their true identities remaining unknown until the end of the game). The President makes his, would be short, journey to Capitol by randomly turning down different roads until he gets there. This is shown by the hideously complex looking coloured lines all over the playing board. Meanwhile, Soviet agents attempt to move into position by bribing, bombing, capturing and bluffing US agents until they get a chance to shoot.

Actually shooting the President requires calculations to be made based on range. This is achieved by examining the various triangles (1st and 2nd stage!) and rhombuses on the playing board.

The agents move in on each other, and the President, on a basic turn sequence aided by a card deck which allows them to do lots of nasty things to each other. This part of the game works, although it can be quite frustrating in parts. The basis of the card play has potential for an excellent card game, however, it is overshadowed by the visual comlexity of the board and counter movement.

The idea of the game is to bluff and double bluff and is the only area where the game actually works to any extent. The unlikely principle that the CIA wouldn't know who the FBI were is rather silly as nobody has any idea who the hell anyone else is! My favourite piece of advice is "The US controller should take a long range shot at the President to convince the other platers he's on their side". The idea behind this being he is unlikely to hit him. But it gets better..."It wouldn't be the first time the CIA has boobed and shot the President!" That sounds



remarkably wrong to me as I can not recall (and I have checked) a (US) President being assassinated by the CIA! I've read lots of global conspiracy books yet there is no proof.

The entire attitude taken towards the intelligence agencies of the USA and USSR is laughable, but then it's just a game. However, these ideas are put across as some sort of pseudo realistic simulation of an assassination attempt. Politics and realism aside though the game is playable, and even fun, in a silent movie *Keystone Cops* sort of way.

A word must be spared for Jack Jaffe the designer and founder of SIGMA (The Society of Inventors of Games and Mathematical Attractions - Nope, I've never heard of them either), if only to say that his name is mentioned 156 times throughout the game, not many times less than the President himself.

The game almost makes it; the problem being the many inadequacies in the rules and general playability. I got the feeling the game doesn't really know whether it's a board game, a bluff game or a card game.

To be honest I can't recommend this game to you, unless you really fancy a ludicrous runaround game that's needlessly complex for what it is. This game came out 12 years ago and even for the time it lacked the innovation, visual presentation and overall style of its contemporaries. ♠

Complexity	Medium
Value for money	💀
Presentation	💀
Playability	★

By Abe Kennedy

Warlord of Baluur

Written by Anthony Herring
Produced by TSR
Price £4.50

Warlord of Baluur is a game adventure produced for use with the **Marvel Super Heroes** role playing game. It is part one of the *Negative Zone Trilogy* which will also include *MLS3, Spore of Arthos* and *MLS4, Stygian Knight*. The scenario includes the ever popular *Fantastic Four* and if more than four players are involved statistics are included for *She-Hulk* and *Power Man* (Luke Cage).

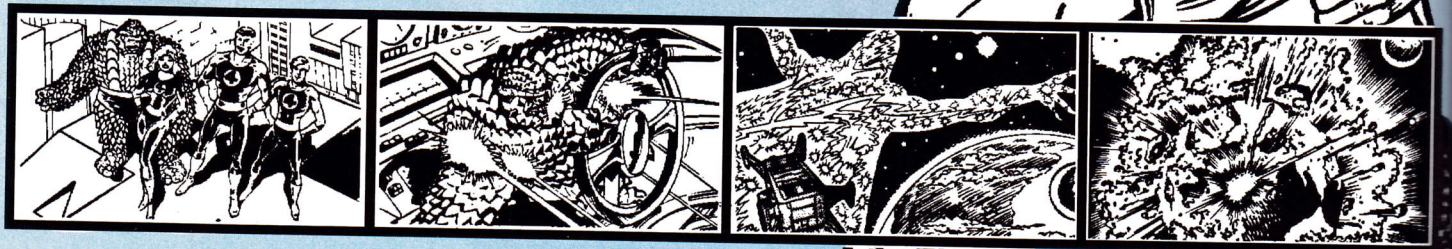
The scenario revolves around a stolen Cosmic Control Rod, an item of great power, and the attempts of various villains and even entities to retrieve it and turn it to their own use. The control rod in question has been stolen from *Annihilus* by *Stygorr* and taken from the negative Zone to Earth. This transfer has torn a hole in the fabric of space and a gate now exists between the two universes; only one thing can close the gate, a nuclear warhead provided by *S.H.I.E.L.D.* To complicate matters the Warlord of Baluur, *Blastaar*, has travelled through the gate intending to invade and take control of the rod for his own use. Only our intrepid heroes stand between him and victory.

The usual bunch of twists and turns in the plot keep the players on their toes throughout, and the challenging tasks of taking on beings from the Negative Zone is guaranteed to keep the players occupied, providing classic comic style action.

If **Warlord of Baluur** is anything to go by then the trilogy should be well worth getting for any **MSH** player, and since it retails at £4.50 it's a bargain. ♠

Complexity:	Low to Medium
Value for Money:	★★★
Presentation:	★★★★
Playability:	★★★★

Review by Cristopher Grimley.



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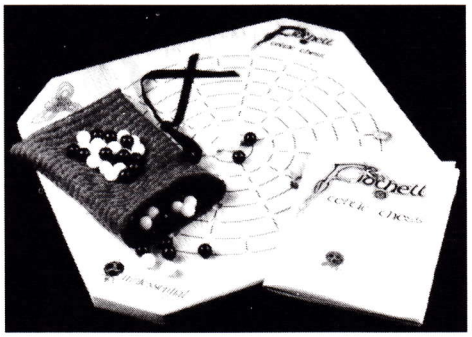
Fidchell (or Fichaell), also known as **Celtic Chess**, or Gwyddbwyll, as it is called in Wales, is a game for 2 to 4 players that all serious researchers have heard of, but few can spell and even fewer can pronounce.



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LIVE ROLE PLAYING

2

..... beyond reality .....

LASERZONE

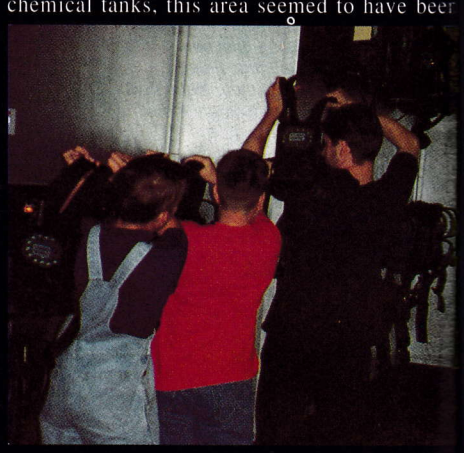
Laser Tag is a fast-growing new sector of the hobby. *Quasar* centres (as covered in issue 1) are springing up all over the UK. However, the running of Laser Tag centres is not restricted to Quasar, there are others coming into existence, such as *Laserquest* in Manchester mentioned last issue. The latest centre to come into existence is *Laserzone* in Birmingham. The *Gamesman* team went to investigate...

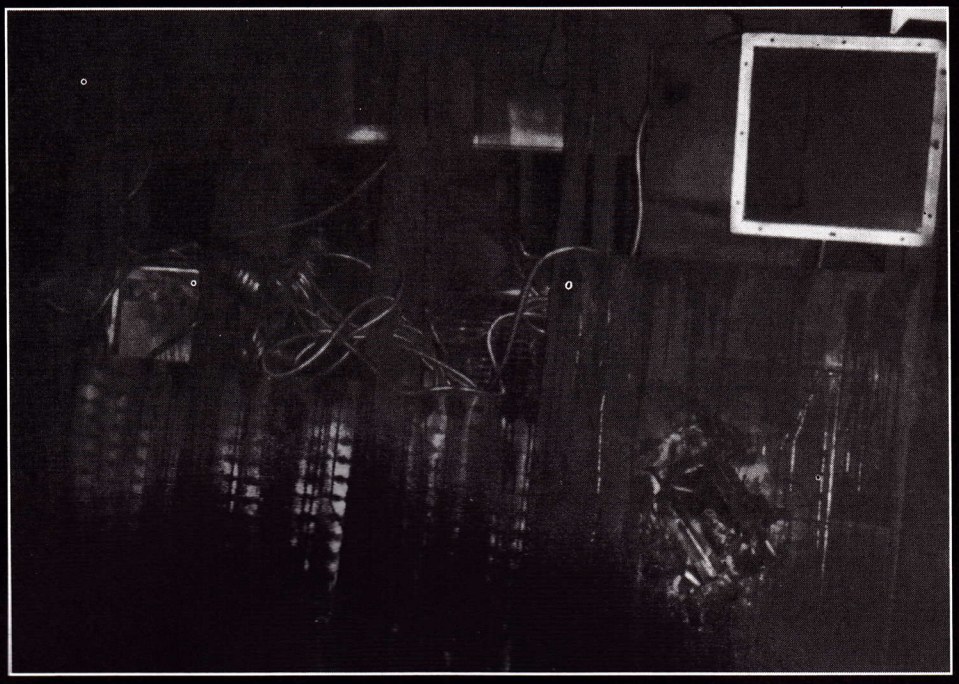
Laserzone is situated on the third floor of Dhillon House in what's left of Birmingham's industrial area. It's not easy to find. Dhillon House being on the very busy Constitution Hill in Hockley, but there are buses that can take you virtually to the door. Entering the building through a side door I had to walk up three dingy flights of stairs that wrap around an old service lift shaft (very Bladerunneresque) before I got to the heavy metal doors leading to the reception area of **Laserzone**. There I was met by Graham Edwards, a 23 year old drama graduate, and creator of **Laserzone**. I was immediately impressed with the layout of the reception. Ahead of me was the airlock - that led to the playing area - slightly to the right was the booking hatch: to the right of that was a door leading to an observation deck and right of that were the toilets. There were also a few video games and a coke machine. Graham first took me behind the scenes and explained how it all got going.

"I played first, last September, at Manchester Laserquest. I came out of the game,well, amazed really, I'd never seen anything like the lasers before, I'd never seen anything like the game area where you could move around zapping all these people, I really didn't know anything like it. I came out of that just sort of talking about it for a week afterwards, it was an incredible experience. When I got back to Birmingham I basically wanted to play the game myself so I spent some time looking around Birmingham, the Midlands and all the surrounding areas and to cut a long story short, there wasn't a laser game in the area. I didn't immediately think I'd set one up myself, it was a case of speaking to the people at Laserquest; they said, well, come along to the NEC, we're having a trade exhibition and you can come and talk to us. So I did that and they were very, very helpful; they showed me various figures and how to get premises and how much space I'd need. About that time Pete (Edwards - Graham's father) was very interested- in terms of the game -he wanted to play, and also in terms of a business. We went up to Manchester, I dragged him up there, his reaction was similar to mine. Again we talked to Manchester which lead to about December time deciding to both go into business together, Pete giving up his teaching job. We started in earnest in January and worked hard to get where we are now."

Once I'd paid for my game (at a very reasonable price in this age of spiralling inflation) I was ushered into the airlock where I was confronted by racks of menacing black backpacks. Once armed up I was given the obligatory safety talk. **Laserzone** is non-contact, there's no running or lying down (a it's very dark inside) and no climbing over the safet rails. We were told that we could be hit either on th front, back, sides or gun. The standard game i everyone for themselves with unlimited shots an lives and lasts for 15 minutes, which may not seem very long, but gives you enough time to get totall pooped and well and truly wasted, as I discovere later. It was then explained that once we were hit ou packs would buzz for 10 seconds, during which tim we'd be unable to shoot or be shot, so we'd bette hide. We were then let into the zone itself, one b one. As I moved up the line the adrenaline began t pump, "this is it", I thought, "I'm going to die...".

I was very surprised by what I saw. As my eye began to adjust to the dim light and smoke, I foun myself in the first of three zones within the playing area, Old Town: This area is intended to be deserted city area, and contains ramps, broke corridors, and a central mounting with various coloured spotlight that cycle on and off, and ha several low passages through its base. From Ol Town I moved to Organic Scourge, probably th most impressive zone. Full of service pipes an chemical tanks, this area seemed to have bee





warped in straight from **Aliens** - it's festooned with webs and slime effects and acid holes are burned through various chemical tanks, very useful to shoot through. I decided not to waste any time and get right through to the third zone, New Town. Dimly lit with the occasional bright spot-light coming on to blind the unsuspecting laserzoner who thinks he's found a safe haven. I dug in and waited for the fodder. All three zones are on two levels, with a three level tower in New Town. Graham has brought all his dramatic experience to bear, having the zone built by set builders out of solid materials instead of scaffolding. With the smoke and freaky soundtrack (including Dr.Who sound FX's) the effect is both dramatic and exciting. The whole area is very carefully designed, with the aid of strategically placed grilles, sand holes and so on, to make it nigh impossible to be in complete cover. Wherever you are, there is always some way that someone can get line of sight on you. The game was played, I got totally smegged and was glad to here the voice over the P.A. saying "Game Over"; not because I didn't enjoy myself, but because I didn't want to get shot any more. Once the game was over we had to get back to the airlock and download the scores from our packs. We went back to reception and checked out how we'd done. I came third from last in a game of 16 people with a score of -24. The point system is interesting. You get 10 points for hitting someone and you loose points for getting hit. Five points for being hit in the front, four for the back and three for the gun. Even though I'd done really badly I couldn't wait to get back in.

Laserzone is an incredible experience, catering for all age groups - form the very young (7 plus) to the retired. If you've never done Laser Tag before, prepare to become an addict. **Laserzone** is open from 10.00am to 10.00pm seven days a week. A game costs £2.50 (10am to 6pm weekdays) and £3.00 evenings and weekends, or £2.00 before 1.00pm for the under 14's. Membership is well worth checking out - for £5.00 you can be a member for a year, which gets you a flat rate of £2.00 per game and many other benefits, such as members nights. Needless to say I joined on my first visit and was invited to the first members night. For £10.00 you're let loose for two hours, from 10.30pm til 12.30am. Twenty members tried out several different games including a promotion game to sort rankings for members; Rank zero being laser fodder, rank one being survivor and moving on up to rank nine - laserzoner. We tried limited lives, limited shots, different people with combinations of both... I won't give any more details because I think I'd spoil it for you if I did. Two packs did go down later on in the evening, however, Graham gave both of those members complimentary tickets to make up, which gives an example of the good attitude that Graham has towards the players. **Laserzone** is going to a lot of trouble to make the game more than just a shoot out. Again, I won't give any details for fear of spoiling it for prospective players, but expect some pleasant surprises if their plans come together. I talked to people who have played laser tag in other parts of the country, and without exception, the verdict was a definite thumbs up. It looks like Graham and Peter have hit upon the right formula, taking laser tag into the next generation. I would recommend anyone in or near the Birmingham area to get down to **Laserzone** and give it a go, I guarantee you'll enjoy it.

Laserzone is planning to bring in more of a roleplaying aspect over the coming months. No special clothing is required, games run for 2 to 24 players, and you can either book in advance or just turn up and wait for an open spot. **To book or for further information ring 021 236 3311 or turn up at 3rd Floor, Dhillon House, 48 Constitution Hill, Birmingham, B19.** ♠

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KRYOMEK

COMPETITION

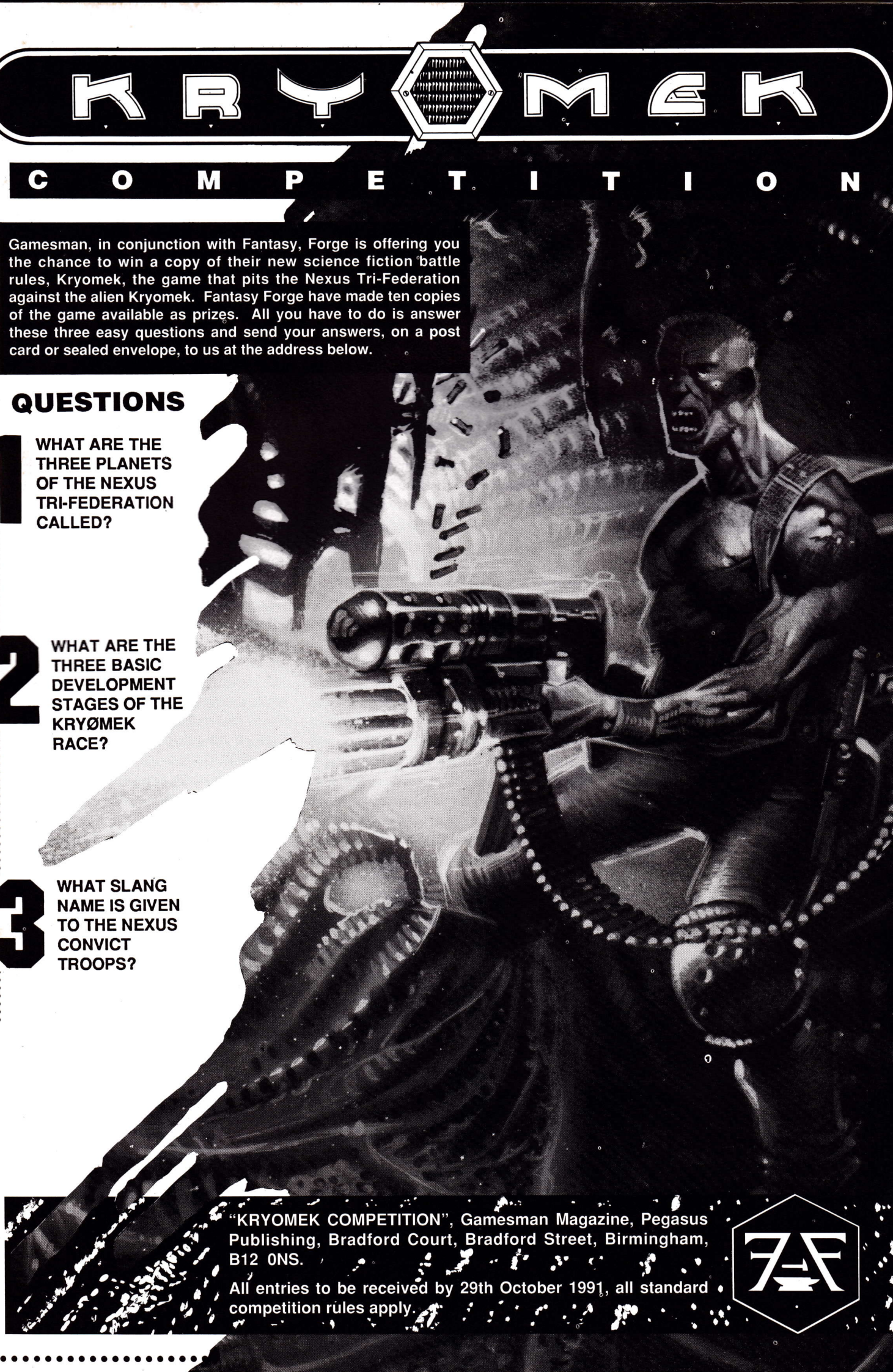
Gamesman, in conjunction with Fantasy, Forge is offering you the chance to win a copy of their new science fiction battle rules, Kryomek, the game that pits the Nexus Tri-Federation against the alien Kryomek. Fantasy Forge have made ten copies of the game available as prizes. All you have to do is answer these three easy questions and send your answers, on a post card or sealed envelope, to us at the address below.

QUESTIONS

1 WHAT ARE THE THREE PLANETS OF THE NEXUS TRI-FEDERATION CALLED?

2 WHAT ARE THE THREE BASIC DEVELOPMENT STAGES OF THE KRYØMEK RACE?

3 WHAT SLANG NAME IS GIVEN TO THE NEXUS CONVICT TROOPS?



"KRYOMEK COMPETITION", Gamesman Magazine, Pegasus Publishing, Bradford Court, Bradford Street, Birmingham, B12 0NS.

All entries to be received by 29th October 1991, all standard competition rules apply.

DIALOGUE with Robert Charrette

GAMES MASTER TO GAMES MASTERS

***Shadowrun* is without doubt one of the best looking role-playing games around. Liz Holiday was able to talk to Robert Charrette, co-designer and author of various spin off novels, while he was in London recently for the launch of Penguin Books new Roc SF imprint:**

"Once FASA decided they wanted to do it, they wanted to do it fairly quickly. I think that was quite good, because at least in terms of the States it was the first cross genre all in one package game. I think that helped enormously with its success. We got there 'firstest' with 'mostest', as one of our civil war generals was wont to say. And it was very good package. It has a very high flip factor, meaning that when you flip through the package it looks neat, it looks exciting."

Though the game is not precisely cynical in its marketing, its blend of new age mysticism and down and dirty Cyberpunk did not come about by accident.

"I guess it would be about three years ago now that I was talking with the FASA Corporation, because I had wanted to do a game with them and we were talking about what sort of game to do. I was having this conversation with the President, Jordan Weissman, and we were saying "OK, what's the next big game genre?" And we sort of looked at each other and said **Cyberpunk**. And we thought about that for a while after that conversation, and it turned out that a lot of people had that very same idea. This was before Talsorian brought out their game called **Cyberpunk**, and before Iron Crown brought out their **Cyberspace**, and before the other smaller attachments. And then Jordan decided he wanted a little spin on it, as is typical. He discovered a book called *Borderlands*, and then *Bordertown*, which were two anthologies that were done a couple of years ago. I don't know if they were done over here - I know they were done in the States. It's a town in between Earth and Faery: Elves on Harleys, that's how they described it."

This is not, as Charrette pointed out, the recently released anthology by the same name, which is edited by Tom Monteleone. He continued, "Anyway, he said, "What if we add magic into it?" I said, "Let me talk to the people I'm working with", because I had put together a design team to do the Cyberpunk game. I lost about half the team as soon as I said "Magic". On the other hand I gained back someone I lost when he thought it was going to be too grim and he didn't want to deal with it. We had done **Aftermath**, the post-holocaust game, together - this is Paul Hume I'm talking about - and our working title on that was "The world's most depressing role playing game". There had been several play-testing sessions that had to be abandoned because they just got too depressing. But he came back to **Shadowrun** when we added magic. So Jordan gave us that brief, and said, "Go off and make it make sense!" So we worked very hard at making it make sense, to develop the right kind of background. Jordan just dovetailed very nicely with us on certain points. Jordan's the ideas man at FASA - previously billed as the boy genius, but he's getting a little old. He's the president and their blue sky-er - the person who comes up with ideas out of the blue.

"**Shadowrun** is the first attempt to fuse a more or less modern setting with fantasy. It's quite different from **Warhammer 40K**, which is so farout science fiction that it might as well be straight fantasy except it's in space. People just said it was really strange, and we had a really tough brief to make that reasonable. FASA was known as a science fiction game company, and this was their first attempt at fantasy, so we wanted to do something that put a pseudo-scientific basis underneath the fantasy elements. So we came up with the idea of the meta-humans being suppressed during a time when the mana, the magic energy, is not high enough: that they sort of hide within the genetic profiles of the human race and other animals. So when the mana is high enough the magic gene, if you will, expresses itself and the fantastic types appear. Even at that we put a twist on it so that the elves and dwarfs are born elves and dwarfs, at least in the first wave of magic. But the orcs and the trolls go through a rather nasty physical transformation."

Apart from its high-concept, high-gloss packaging, **Shadowrun** has been noted for the speed with which it appeared. Perhaps this is why some of the proofreading is so ropy, at least in the earliest versions, which does not make the game particularly easy to play: "One of the things that we encountered is that there is a very high threshold of people getting over the fact that the system is different, that it doesn't play exactly like a lot of other games. It takes a little getting used to. And there were some glitches in the first edition, including some major ones, where the editor thought "Oh, I know what that says!" and they didn't, so they re-wrote it."

When it comes down to it, though, not all the problems with the game's lack of easy playability come down to proofreading errors, as Charrette is the first to admit: "I didn't mean to be disparaging when I said there's that high threshold of getting used to it, because we had some very experienced gamers doing it who had problems getting used to it, because it *was* different."

And as for the proof-reading problems: "Part of the problem was the speed at which it went through the operation. No game company does the amount of testing they would like to do. They can't. They don't have the staff either to do it themselves or to co-ordinate people from outside to do it. Then there's this other phenomena. It's one thing when you've got a hundred people testing it, you know, ten groups of ten. It's very different when you've got a hundred thousand people testing it. All kinds of things start coming up that you never got before. It's also very different when you've got people who don't know what the designers had in mind and can't ask them. That's when you learn that you didn't explain it well. You see things in other games: how many revisions and explanations has **Dungeons and Dragons** gone through?"

Perhaps the difference between **D&D** and a less well established game system is that people are confident enough to wing the rules they don't know, and to work out their own house rules as necessary: "Well my personal design philosophy says that's just grand, do it the way you want. My feeling is that what makes a role-playing game is the role master and the players and the world they are playing in. The rules don't matter. One of the best campaigns I've played in was an **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** game officially, because that was the rule system we were using - but we hardly ever used the rules, and don't much care for the rules. But I can also think of some of the best role playing sessions that I've ever had where we never rolled the dice."

So just where did the trade off between playability and realism come? "Well, first and foremost **Shadowrun** was intended to be a storytelling mechanic, to allow a lot of leeway in that regard. Having written the novels, I found that the **Shadowrun** game system helps me tremendously there, because of the system of using successes and stuff. You don't run into "Well, he's too high a level, and he couldn't have missed at that", or "He should have been able to

do that"; if you want to worry about the game system, he just rolled terribly or he rolled extremely well for the results of what happened. And that really makes it easier to tell better stories, to tell more effective stories.

I spent a lot of my time, after working on the brief for the game designers, working on the universe. Since the game came out that's basically where I've been. I haven't been involved in the game design end of it.

It is very much a growing game, and a mutating game. They just brought out **Virtual Realities** which is a Matrix source book, and it changes a little bit about how to do that. The **Grimoire** corrected the really screwed up astral combat rules, as well as expanding the magic. Some of the design team think it went a little bit too far in making magic awfully powerful, and that's probably going to get fixed soon. It threw the game balance off a little bit. That's another example of something that went through too quickly. The commercial aspect drove it a little too hard for the art aspect of it. The design wasn't smoothed out as nicely as it should have been, because the product had to get out."

The thing that puts what Charrette would call the "flip factor" up most is **Shadowrun's** artwork. Here again, things were not always as easy as they might have been, for the designers had no control over what the pictures looked like: "I sent some sketches in with some of the devices we were talking about so that the artists would understand. They hardly used them. They sent us some sketches when we were working on the characters to talk about what was going on.

We had some severe confusions. We were designing the universe while Larry Elmore was doing the cover picture, and we saw the cover picture and it was like, "Why is that gun ejecting ammunition?" We had gone to caseless ammunition, so we had to go back and allow non-caseless ammunition, which doesn't make any sense. If you look at advances in technology, it's happening now. In fifty years the hi-tech guns will not be firing cased ammunition. And we wrote several other things in because of that. We sort of had to explain the picture - "Why is this picture on the cover and what are these people doing?" So that was kind of strange. It kind of worked out both ways. We'd see a picture and we'd write something, or we'd write something and someone would do a picture. But it was artists working in separate garrets who happened to have the same or similar inspirations, rather than people working under the same roof."

Obviously, Charrette's design work on **Shadowrun** and the novels based on the game are closely tied to each other. For instance, there will be a British source pack to go with his new book *Choose Your Enemies Carefully*, which is partly set here. "They changed my brief on the novel and said "You're going to England because we want to tie it in with the UK source book which we'll be bringing out at the same time." It didn't happen! The UK source book may be out in a couple of months. One of the things that FASA have been trying to do is that they have been trying to get them written by people who actually live in the countries. This is like, a really radical concept in the gaming industry! So there's a German source book being written, and I believe a French one, and then there's some talk about an Italian one. These are being written in those languages and they'll be translated. Depending on their size and interest, they'll either be combined into a Europe source book or they'll start a round robin sort of thing to publish them in turn.

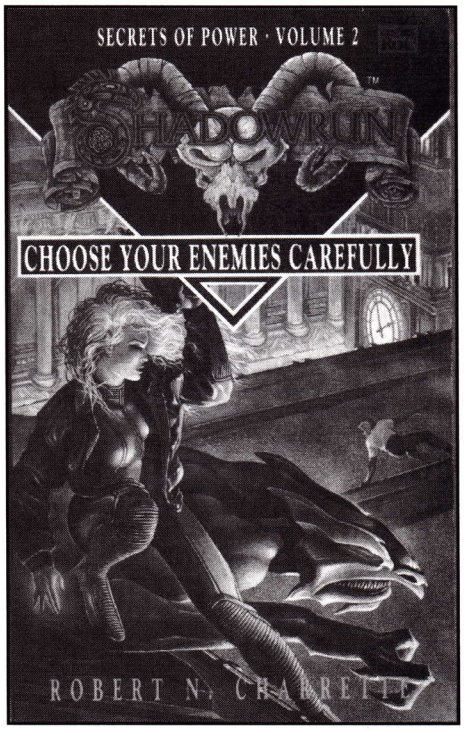
The British one has been written, it's been edited and I read a draft copy of it. As is often the case it was written parallel to my writing the novel, so they don't 100% line up. Some of the extrapolations were different from the intent. That's one of the continual problems we have in the **Shadowrun** universe. FASA did not want to pay to have a bible written, so we're doing it out of our heads and occasionally the communication isn't there, so we get skews on the intent that are not quite what they should be. So one person will pick up a concept and look at all the clues that are there and figure out what they think is going on, but not quite get it right."

Charrette's gaming background stood him in good stead when he turned to writing fiction, not only because it enabled him to develop his writing skills and a professional attitude, but also because it provided him with some essential contacts: "I hadn't done any fiction writing since I was at college, which was some time ago. I had been working with the gaming stuff, running my adventures and I discovered that I was writing more and more complex characters and more and more complex scenarios that required dramatic conclusions that I was not getting out of my players. I had settings, I had plots, I had characters to interact with. The only thing I did not have was protagonists and having them go through it to a dramatic conclusion.

I approached the president of FASA at a convention and said, "I hear you're doing novels", and he says "Who wants to know?" So I said, "Well, I was thinking I might do one for you". He said "Oh *really!*" They had tried to hire me for their staff a year or two before that, so they were familiar with my game work. So we talked about it, and I said "I haven't written a novel before. You want to give me a chance?" So I wrote a **Battletech** novel for them. I turned it in on deadline, and discovered that it had the fastest trip through editorial of anything they have ever had, meaning the editor didn't have to do much to it, that it was competently done. So it was like, I sat down one day and wrote it. So there's not a very long background there. None of this seven years writing a novel in a garret and hoping some day it will be published: just getting a contract and doing it to spec."

As for this new book, *Choose Your Enemies Carefully* is not only steeped in the **Shadowrun** background, it is also the second part of a trilogy. As such, it makes very few concessions to the new reader: in fact, had I not played the game, I think I would have been completely lost. "That's true, but the Cyberpunk genre has very much a "toss you in and see if you float up to the surface" kind of approach to things. Most of the books I have read in the genre are very much steamroller kind of things. I can remember reading Walter Jon Williams *Hardwired* and not realising till I was quite a ways through it that it was written in the present tense. I just kept thinking "There's something odd about this", without being able to figure out what it was. There's just so much going on that it's very hard to recap and to lay in the groundwork. It's a very intricate storyline. The plot is complex."

Later, Charrette told me, "The whole **Shadowrun** universe is like that; you have to pay attention to whose telling you what. Even in the gaming product, we flat out lied in places. We've lied - from a certain point of view. And we've told the truth in several places - from a whacko point of view. For instance, we've had some authorities lie about how magic works, and I've been given the brief to get official about one of the secrets in the next novel, which will be coming out next year. In **Battletech** there was *Wolff's Dragoons*, and no-one knew where they came from but they had very fancy equipment. And eventually it gets revealed where they came from. Well when FASA started that they really didn't know where *Wolff's Dragoons* came from. They just put in this mystery and said, well, we'll fill it in later. Then when it came time to fill it in it was, you know, find out all the references and try to make sense of it. And I think we did a pretty good job of that. In the case of **Shadowrun** we built some of those in already. The phrase that we use is that *FASA is functioning as a game-master to the game-masters."* ♠



SCAN

STOLEN

We have a request from the Forge of Lien for any information as to the whereabouts of several items stolen from them.

These items include a Dragon Staff, as shown, and a Red Imp staff, both four feet long with screw top removable heads and spitting mechanisms in the mouth, both are around 4ft long and quite unique. Only the Birmingham based Fantasy Factory has a similar Dragon Staff purchased from the forge. Also stolen were a 42" bone handle look Katana, two Short spears with platted knotwork decoration (around 36" in length), a Falcatta sword with copper coloured horse-head pommel, a 4' two Headed axe with Celtic dog design on the heads in gold, a 4' spear/sword with suede bound handle.

The items were stolen from their trade tent on Saturday night (24th August) while the Forge was at the Drum Hill site in Derby.

If you have any information as to the whereabouts of these items then contact the Forge of Lien at their new address.

The Forge of Lien
"Woodlands"
Exbourne
Nr. Oakhampton
Devon
EX20 3QZ.

After moving to their new workshop the Forge are also starting with a bang, on offer is a free boot dagger with every order over sixty pounds, if you are interested contact them at the address above.

ALL KINDS OF GAMES

"All Kinds of Games" (may not be the chosen name) which, it is hoped, will open between Oct. 15th - Nov. 1st. 1991 is planned to realise the concept of a really specialist comprehensive games shop, supplying (as far as possible) all kinds of games, and only games, or games related items. The premises, (near the Strand and on the edge of Covent Garden) cover about 3,000 sq. ft. on two floors and will provide separate areas for traditional games such as Chess, Backgammon, Mah Jongg etc.; proprietary board games; computer games; and fantasy gamesas well as relevant books.

It is hoped to organise an ongoing series of traditional and proprietary boardgame competitions, open to the public (with worthwhile prizes for the finalists) with the aim of simulating and maintaining interest in such games and widening the market for them. Separate from this considerable space on the lower ground floor will allow for fantasy and role playing games to be played on a normal basis at any time.

The mail order and play by mail aspects of selling will also be used and it is intended to promote the sale of all games and game related products in every possible way. Also without detriment to the obvious commercial need to encourage sale of the most popular mass market games in which a high turnover can be expected, some emphasis will be placed on presenting the more interesting, unusual, and beautiful game artifacts (e.g. quality chess, backgammon and solitaire sets, original playing cards, jigsaw and other puzzles featuring fine art design. To this end an exhibition is being arranged (with the co-operation of, amongst others, The English Playing Card Society) to illustrate the use of fine art designs in playing cards, games and puzzles. They are still seeking interesting contributions to this exhibition.

We are also keen to make contact with any firms or individuals who may be interested in supplying goods or helping in any way.

Adelaide Book Centre,
9 Adelaide Street,
Strand,
WC2N 4HZ.
01-836 6502

DARE YOU ENTER THE SPACE BALL.

The Space Ball, or Human Gyroscope as it's creator Roger De Havilland calls it, will soon be seen all over the country. This machine is based on the NASA training instrument designed to acclimatise astronauts to the tumbling motion experienced in orbit. The machine is contained in a clear plastic sphere measuring over eight feet in diameter with a single seat in the middle of two hefty steel rings that rotate at 90° to each other. As the rings turn you're spun around every axis. I had a go and, suffering from travel sickness, didn't cope very well; it was great fun though. The best thing about this contraption is that it uses no electricity, has no generator, makes no noise and is completely ozone friendly. The reason for this is the motor power is provided by a human turning the rings by hand, via a wheel on the outside of the dome.

It's a very interesting experience, which I didn't particularly enjoy, however. I was the only one who didn't want to go on it again and again. The manufacturers intend to have the Space Ball installed in shopping centres, department stores and entertainment centres which should happen soon' because a static ball cost only £6000.00 to buy outright. There is also a mobile version which retails at about £1500.00 more, which you'll see at shows and fairs later next year.

De Havilland also intents to have a two seater version of the machine available by Christmas. Keep your eyes peeled for the first in this new wave of environmentally friendly entertainment modules. If you want to know more contact:

Roger De Havilland,
Bradford Court,
Bradford Street,
Birmingham,
B12 0NS.

Tel:- 021 766 6622
Fax:- 021 766 6162

COVER OFFER

You've probably seen the card on the cover and I bet you're dying to know more about it. The offer is from KJC and involves the game *Quest*. If you're interested read on since this is an overview of it.

Quest is an open ended computer moderated fantasy roleplaying play-by-mail game of epic proportions, set on the world of Kharne two hundred years after the fall of the evil Fleyshur the Destroyer's Hegemony, just as life seems to be returning to its former greatness. The years of disorder have, however, led to an unchecked increase in the monsters inhabiting the wilderness. There are rumours of more fearsome creatures lurking in underground dungeons, once former homes of the rich and famous, now long since abandoned, but yet perhaps still containing some of their former treasures.

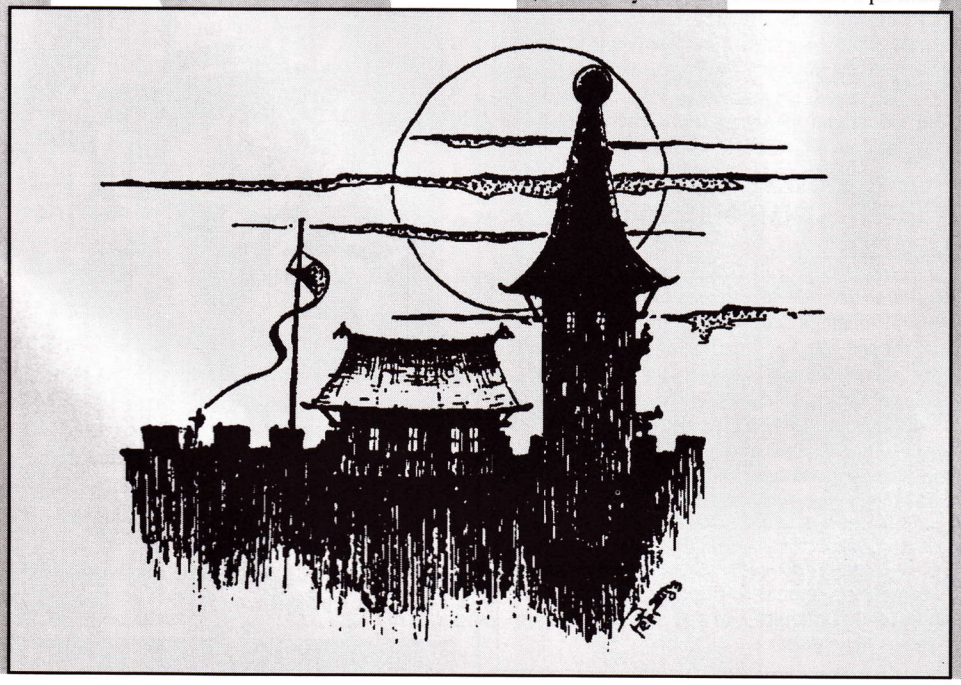
The world itself is a single continent surrounded by a sea of some 200 by 200 squares, each containing a terrain type with an almost natural look to the positioning of forests, swamps, deserts, mountain ranges and rivers. This in itself should please the mapping freaks, with an accessible 20,000 or so sectors to explore and each forest, river and mountain range having an individual name.

Scattered over the land are a score or so of major cities, an essential source of the more exotic supplies a party may need, about twice as many towns as cities and numerous small villages. Each new party to the game starts in a town or city where basic essential supplies are available (at a price). Fortunately the initial characters come equipped with rudimentary weaponry, armour and enough rations for a few turns, so survival is not too difficult to begin with.

Being an open ended game, the actions of your hand picked party are entirely up to you. There are a total of eight different gods which a party's priest may follow, each being the sponsor of three different miracles, giving even the most unskilled priest access to powerful spells if devout enough. The alignment system used, for once, diverges from the traditional **AD&D** system (TM, ©, (R), etc.) still maintaining the good and evil, but replacing the law and chaos with a peace and war scale.

As well as the priests, there are three other classes of character: the fighter, essential to a party's survival in the more hostile terrains; the thief, great for illegal activities in towns and probably just a little more observant than the rest of the party; and the mage, who couldn't fight his or her way out of a paper bag but could probably quite happily teleport out, given a plentiful supply of spell ingredients and lots of practice. The initial printout offers a choice of sixteen characters, one of each type and race (human, elf, dwarf or halfblood) from which up to six different ones may be chosen to make up the initial party, all as part off the first turn.

One of the problems in the past, with open-ended games, has been that the players find themselves wandering around aimlessly. Not so, however, with **Quest**. Some shops and towns are sponsors of short-term objectives or tasks, known as 'Quests'. Naturally, some of these are for financial reward, such as purchasing a rare earthenware pipe for somebody at a good profit rate; others may be to seek out and kill a particular monster which has been terrorising the locals, the only reward being fame and glory (and a nice trophy for the mantelpiece!).



Another interesting feature of **Quest** is the chat list. Each turn players may add or subtract up to four words from this list. Every time a talkative, friendly monster or character is met, or a shopkeeper is not too busy for a quick chat, this list is examined and, should the creature concerned know anything about a word on the chat list, the information is passed on to the party. This is quite often in the form of information tokens giving a detailed explanation of the monster, god, powder, or whatever is being spoken about.

KJC have been moderating the game for almost a year and a half, but unlike other open-ended or long-lasting games (such as Sloth's Kingdom) it has not suffered from a high drop-out rate. Each game, of which there are twelve in all, has a capacity for a thousand player groups.

KJC employ a full-time programmer, who has been kept busy over the past year with various player suggestions for improvements, in fact, so much so that a second edition of the rulebook had to be released earlier this year just to gather all the improvements into one rulebook!

Among the recent improvements is the laser printing of turn results, making for a much more legible read and a feeling of higher quality to the turn results than ever possibly achievable from a dot matrix printer.

The rulebook itself at first appears rather daunting, weighing in at a hefty 32 pages, but is very professionally set out. The game orders use the same easy-to-follow system of a letter followed by one or more numbers as made famous by **'It's a Crime!'**. There is at least one order per letter (with the exception of V), making a total of over forty orders, although once you get into the game it is fairly easy to remember which letter stands for which order because the associated actions are related to the letter, e.g.. B for a Buy order, T for a Talk or Track order depending upon location, and P for Pray.

With a total of fifteen orders and four chat list words per turn, generating about four or five sides of result printout, **Quest** represents excellent value for money. What makes the game even better is about every three turns a player-edited newsletter is that supplied free of charge containing the latest gossip from the game, news of alliances, records of who has killed the most number of unfriendly (or friendly!) monsters, artwork, corny jokes and the odd short story; all contributions from players themselves.

SILVER SCREEN

TERMINATOR II. (CERT 15)

Not another sequel? Yes, but well tought through and well worth seeing. The unexpected twists of two terminators, and Arnie coming back as the **Good Guy** add to this exciting fast action movie. The film is packed with fascinating special effects, which leave you spellbound. Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) ridiculed for her knowledge of the future, escapes from a maximum security assylum to realy kick ass. Her son, John (Edward Furlong) befriends his terminator guardian (Arnold Schwarzenegger) sent back by himself, to protect the young John Connor from the next generation of Terminator, learns from him and teaches him a few of the finer points of human life. Can a machine understand human emotions, and will he *be back*? Watch and find out. *Asta la Vista Baby!*

THE ROCKETEER. (CERT PG)

Don't let the rating or the Disney connection put you off, The Rocketeer is just as much a film for adults as it is for children. It's a clean cut, fun film full of action and tasteful humour. The effects are superb and the plotline a fitting tribute to Dave Stevens' comic character. It's good to see a film without excessive violence and swearing that still works so well on all levels. Go and see it, you won't be disappointed.

SILENCE OF THE LAMBS. (CERT 18)

This is one film that for once lives up to the hype that has preceded it. Director Jonathan Demme has not opted for the easy option of making the film the kind of splatter fest that one would normally associate with a film about serial killers, but has created an incredibly taut piece of drama, playing the gore and violence down as much as possible. Instead, the film is about well crafted and believable characters. There is no doubt that Anthony Hopkins, as the magnetic and cooly psychotic Dr. Hannibal Lecter, steals the show, but it is the characters of FBI agent Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) and potential victim Catherine Martin (Brooke Smith) who win your attention and admiration.

The film should pull in the Oscars by the armful. Meanwhile standby for the flood of inferior imitations that will inevitably crop up in its wake.

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS. (CERT 15)

A modern fairy tale, indeed a modern classic. While the movie houses are being bombarded with sequels this movie stands alone on a very high footing.

Johnny Depp's portrayal of a man created by man only to remain unfinished, unable to touch another human being (but with an uncanny talent for hedge-trimming and the odd hair cut) is superlative. A film for both young and old alike. Miss it and weep, see it and weep.

SMALL SCREEN

PREDATOR 2 (CERT 18) FOX HOME VIDEO. (Rental)

Yet another sequel, and this time round we see if the lure of the Predator is strong enough to carry the film without Arnie. The basic idea of this picture is the same as the original, but it's set in los Angeles, not the jungle. Danny Glover plays the Predator's hunter - as dedicated Detective Lieutenant Mike Harrigan - and turns in a good performance. A shame the same can't be said for most of the rest of the cast. The Predator's weapons have been updated, and we see far more through his infra-red vision system. However it's a pity that the script bypasses storyline completely, and settles for continuous, confusing action at breakneck speed all the way through. Only dedicated **Predator** fans I'm affraid.

EVE OF DESTRUCTION. (CERT 18) GUILD HOME VIDEO. (Rental)

A military robot disguised as a cute female is America's latest secret weapon. Unfortunately for The Pentagon, whilst on a test run, the robot (EVE VIII) gets damaged and escapes to prey on the unsuspecting public. Gregory Hines and Dutch actress Renee Soutendijk play the lead roles as military expert and scientist respectively, enlisted to stop the robot in its tracks. This is an action movie with a difference - the female lead role. Where usually you'd have big Arnie, you have an attractive Dutch newcomer playing rough. From this angle it's an interesting watch, but don't expect too much from it.

THE ROOKIE. (CERT 18) WARNER HOME VIDEO. (Rental)

Charlie Sheen and Clint Eastwood in an action packed buddy movie. Eastwood's strengths have always been in either cop or cowboy films, his humorous endeavours not really coming up to scratch. The use of Charlie Sheen as a younger side-kick is a sensible move, putting the now aged Eastwood in a more believable mature role. Much of what you'd expect from Eastwood, some unfunny jokes, some decent punchlines and plenty of stunts and action. The storyline's not bad either.

DARK ANGEL. (CERT 18) ENTERTAINMENT IN VIDEO. (Rental)

An intergalactic drug dealer crashes to Earth and begins to prey on the human, race extracting the natural chemical endorphins from unsuspecting victims and reselling it as the ultimate drug on his own planet. Dolph Lundgren turns in one of his strongest parts to date (much better than **The Punisher**) as a cop tracking down this unusual foe. The plotline twists and turns with F.B.I corruption mixed in for good measure, resulting in a run of the mill action movie with some unique slants.

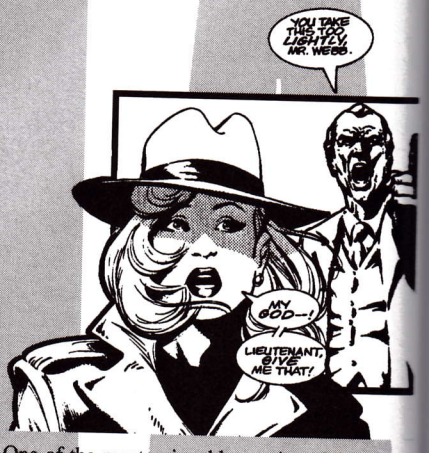
Contibutions for this section of **Gamesman** should be addresses to us marked "Multi-Media" and should run to around 300 words, companies should also provide an accompanying photograph.

THE PAPER CHASE

The detective genre has played an important part in the comic field. Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy* springs immediately to mind; this inspired Bob Kane's *Batman* which debuted in *Detective Comics #27* back in 1940, and legions of would be sleuths soon came out from behind their magnifying glasses. Most fondly remembered is Will Eisner's *The Spirit*, and still being printed by Kitchen Sink.

The greatest detective of all, *Sherlock Holmes* has seen more than his fair share of deducing on the comic page and from publishers throughout the world. These have taken the form of adaptions straight from the books, wholly new created tales and parodies. Some good ones came out in the Warren magazines of the seventies, while Dan Day has been juggling a deerstalker and beret cap for the past few years with his adaptions for several publishers - the most recent being Tome Press.

Female detectives have come into their own in the past decade. *Somerset Holmes* was a Hitchcockian thriller running to six issues before being collected as a graphic novel, while *Ms. Tree* written by current *Dick Tracy* scribe was until recently a hardboiled independent series which now resides at DC Comics.



One of the most enjoyable comics of the genre is *The Maze Agency*, written by Mike W. Barr with Adam Hughes as the original artist. Superficially one might respond to it as being similar to *Moonlighting* with both a male and female partnership, but is as much a humour series as action orientated and is published by Innovation.

In fact if any of these titles have aroused your interest why not do a bit of detective work of your own and search them out. - **PHB.**

PUZZLES

This is a regular feature in **Gamesman**, with a range of puzzles from Ken Russell and Philip Carter for you to stretch your brains around. Send in your answer on a post card or sealed envelope marked "Gamesman Puzzles'. Deadline for entries from this issue is 29th October 1991. Answers will be printed in issue 6. There are some prizes to be given away this issue as an incentive for those brain boxes amongst you . *Good luck!*

Children's Puzzle

Hidden in the grid are the names of *10 birds*. They can be found in any direction, but always in a straight line. Letters can be used more than once.

H	N	W	O	R	C
S	W	I	T	I	T
U	R	K	B	E	L
R	E	I	R	O	C
H	N	N	O	A	R
T	E	N	N	I	L

Lewis

If Lewis was driving the latest Volkswagen model with a number plate'ML8 ML8". *What colour was the car? Win a copy of Robert N. Charrette's Choose Your Enemies Carefullly.*

Dice

A gambler made 3 dice.
The white die had the numbers 2-4-9 twice on its falls.
The blue die had the numbers 3-5-7 twice on its falls.
The green die had the numbers 1-6-8 twice on its falls.
The total on each dice was the same, 30, but the gambler let his oponent choose a die first. The gambler could then select a die which would give him a better chance of winning. *How was that?*

Sloane Number

What is the first whole number to use three words in its *normal* English description?
Win a copy of GDW's Dark Conspiracy (see this month's Showcase).

Solutions from issue 2.

Sentence

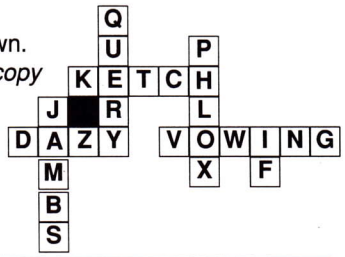
"Marge" lets Norah see Sharon's telegram.
*Congratulations to **Gail Baker** of Brighton, who wins a copy of TSR's **WWII: European Theatre of Operations**.*

Childrens Puzzle: Scales

To balance the scales **98lbs** would be required.

Skeleton Crossword

The crossword grid is as shown. *Unfortunately no-one wins a copy of ICE's **Bladestorm**, as we received no correct enteries by the deadline date.*



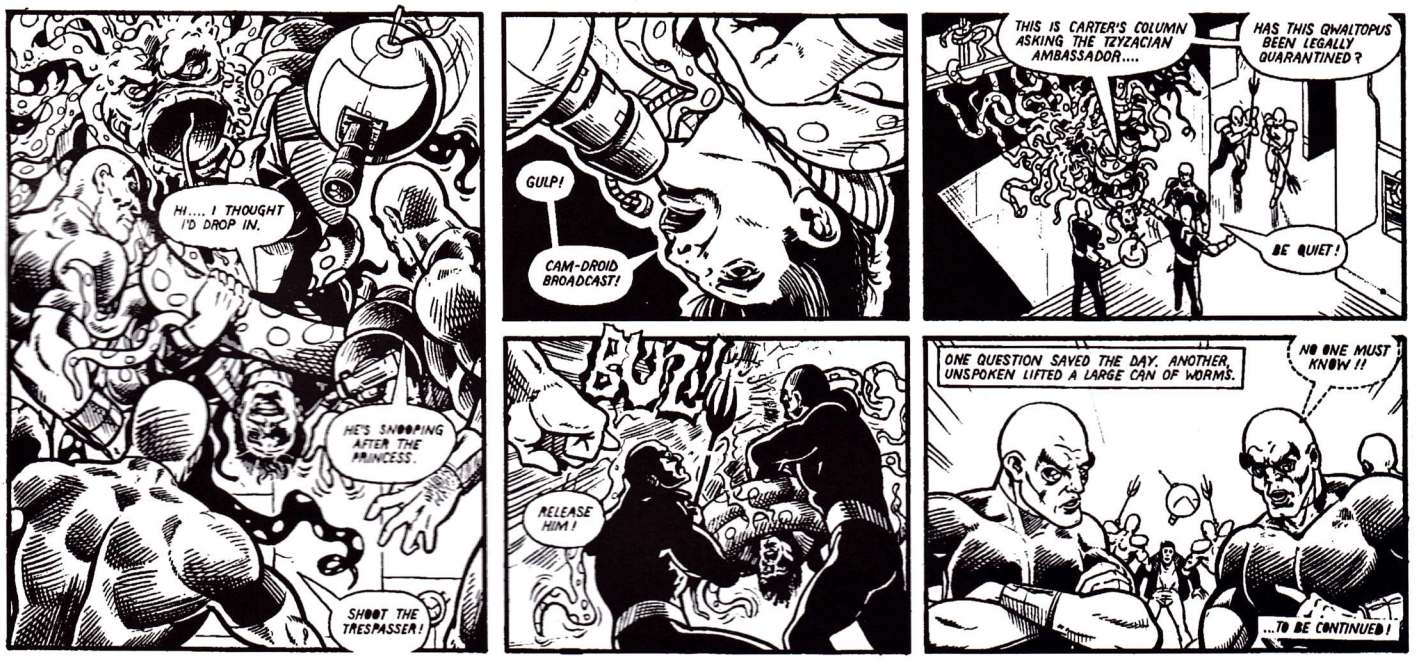
Pair Words

	ANSWER 1	ANSWER 2
MAMMAL	- HORSE	- KNIGHT
KNIGHT	- CHESS	- INDIAN
INDIAN	- BANYAN	- TREE
TREE	- BOW	- ARROW
ARROW	- CUNEIFORM	- WEDGE
WEDGE	- HEEL	- SOLE
SOLE	- FISH	- MACKEREL
MACKEREL	- SKY	- SUN
SUN	- STAR	- SIRIUS
SIRIUS	- DOG	- MAMMAL

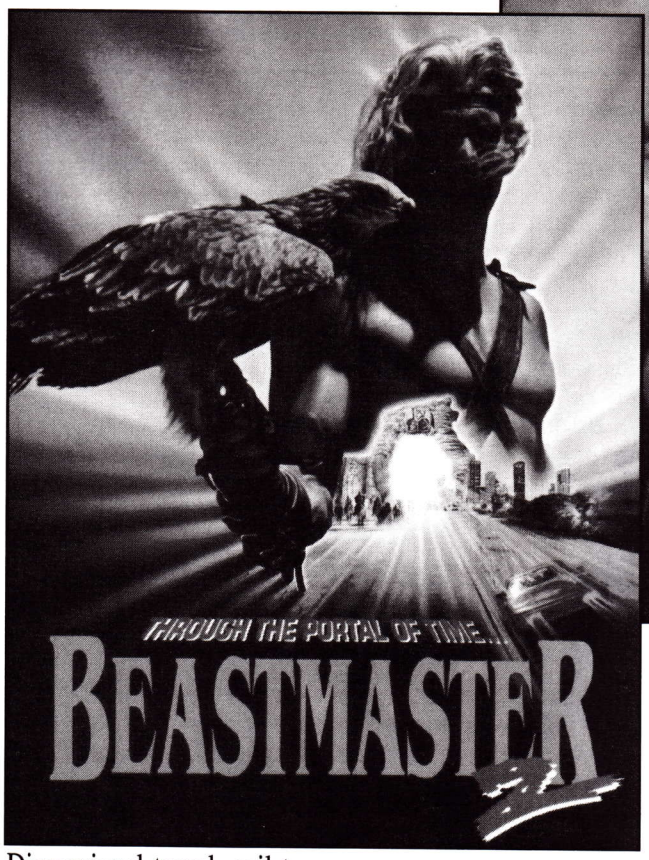
Well done to everyone who sent in correct enteries. We are only too sorry that we can't give a prize to all of you, but do keep the entries coming in, just for fun.

CARTER'S COLUMN

© BIRCH/ROYLE/HARRISON



FILM



Dimensional travel, evil tyranny, sorcery and animal magic (Johnny Morris is nowhere to be seen) are just a few of the elements that go into Medusa Pictures' new fantasy action adventure film **BEASTMASTER II**, *Through the Portal of Time* (Cert. PG), to be released on video on 23 October after a limited cinema run.

It features the star of the original *'Beastmaster'*, Marc Singer (also known for his role in the TV series *'V'* and films such as *'Watchers 2'*) as the hero Dar, Wings Hauser (star of *'Reason to Die'* and *'Sight Unseen'*) as the evil tyrant Arklon, Sarah Douglas (of *Superman 1&2* and *Conan the Destroyer* fame) as the sorceress Lyranna and Kari Wuher (*'Fire with Fire'* and *'The Adventures of Ford Fairlane'*) as the fun-loving 'Earth girl' heroine Jackie.

The story of **Beastmaster II** begins in the primitive and mystical land of Arok, a world that exists in a parallel dimension to Earth, just beyond a magical doorway. It is in the days following the death of King Zed and Arkon's once peaceful people are now terrorised by the cruel tyrant Lord Arklon, who has been able to enslave them using the supernatural powers of the Key of Magog. Unfortunately for Arklon the Key's powers tend to go on the blink once in awhile which makes him quite vulnerable. However, help is at hand in the form of the sorceress Lyranna, who has been surveying the Earth though the Portal of Time and makes Arklon aware of the existence of Earth's nuclear weapons, in particular a nasty little device known as a 'neutron detonator' that is capable of wiping out life on an entire continent.

Dar, who has been leading the rebellion against Arklon, escapes capture at the beginning of the film only to fall into the hands of a creature in the swamps of Arok. Fortunately the creature has been sent on a mission to find him and, just before dying, tells Dar of his destiny. Dar has an evil twin brother who must be destroyed lest he destroy Arok, his twin can be found in the 'western region'.

Meanwhile in the 'western region' Arklon (surprise, surprise, you guessed it Dar's evil twin brother) waits at the Portal of Time with Lyranna and several guards, ready to travel to Earth and steal a 'neutron detonator' that will allow him to conquer Arok for all time. Enter our heroine Jackie, the fun loving daughter of a senator, speeding down California's interstate five being chased by the police (she's no big time criminal she's just joyriding) and turns into a side alley unaware that it is a dead end. Just as she is about to crash into a brick wall she slams on the brakes but is too late and hits it only to go through the gate to Arok, closely followed by two police cars. A minor fracas between Arklon's guards and the police begins, during which she escapes to the desert. The police are blown back through the portal when one of their cars explode.

"What Tiger?!!"

Jackie is eventually forced to abandon her Porsche when it runs out of fuel and, not really sure where she is, sets off in search of 'gas' (petrol to the English speaking world) station. She meets up with Dar and his animals, Ruh the Tiger, Sharak the Eagle and Podo and Kodo the Ferrets, and they set off together to find Arklon and the portal. Unfortunately Arklon's men capture Jackie so Dar and his animals are left to find the portal alone. He reaches it just as Arklon, Lyranna and Jackie go through to Earth. Dar follows only to be trapped by Arklon and falls into the hands of the police.

There follows a dramatic chase in and around L.A. as Dar searches for Arklon and Arklon searches for the dreaded nuclear device. Cultures clash as the protagonists from Arok attempt to adjust to life in L.A. and perform their various tasks, leading up to a somewhat predictable climax at L.A.'s city zoo where Dar and Arklon fight it out over possession of the world shattering, and activated, neutron detonator and the magical Key of Magog.

The films title sequence and first few minutes seem to be very reminiscent of sequences from the Planet of the Apes movies that we all love so much, the sun silhouetting riders on a ridge. In fact the one thing that you can say about Beastmaster II is that it seems to draw inspiration from many different film genres, including almost western style pursuit scenes on horseback, a villain that has been disfigured, as in Hawk the Slayer or The Vikings, and the Kyle Rees (a la terminator) scene where Dar is in an L.A. police station. Unfortunately this mish-mash of imagery did not work well as a whole and left me felling as if each scene was somehow incomplete, probably aided by the films production staff whose editing was at times somewhat ropey, cutting from one camera angle to another at the most inopportune moments.

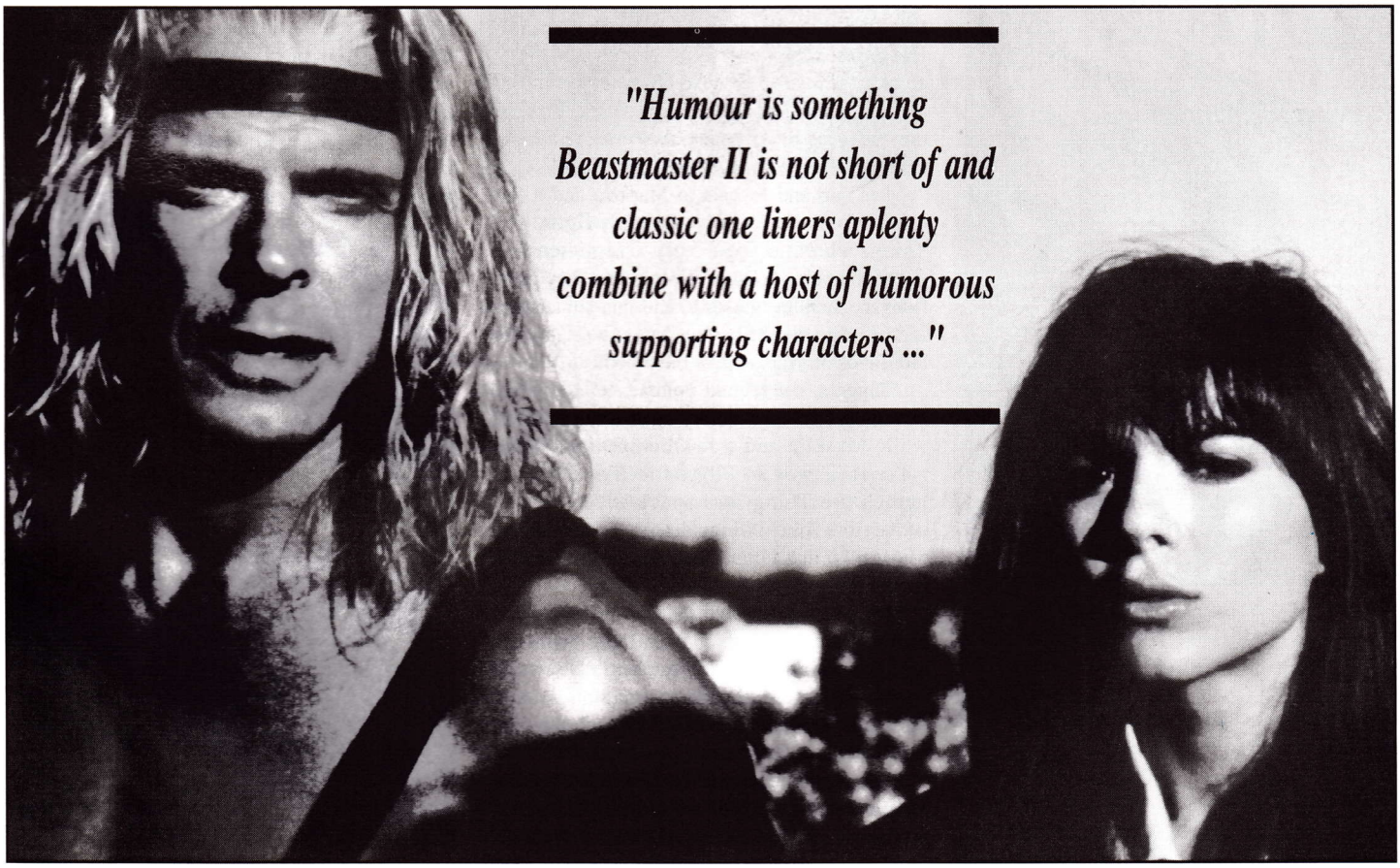
Dar, now a shocking blond rather than fair haired as he was in the first film, was quite well

"What on Arok is that?"

portrayed by Mr. Singer, but his performance was almost completely over shadowed by Hauser's portrayal of Arklon, he really makes a classic villain amongst villains, a villain that would make any Superhero game referee proud to have developed, a villain that you wouldn't mind meeting, on a good day, humorous but deadly. Luckily humour is something that Beastmaster II is not short of and classic one liners aplenty combine with a host of humorous supporting characters, such as the bumbling, and dare I say it, senile Admiral Binns, superbly played by Larry Dobkin. This humour saves an otherwise slow and somewhat cliched film from being a complete turkey, a film in which many of the fight scenes look completely artificial, belittling many of the well thought out and brilliantly executed special effects.

Human actors aside the show is certainly stolen by the film's other stars, the animals. Many of the scenes involving Ruh the Tiger are quite simply fantastic, congratulations have to go to the animal trainer Brian McMillan and the ever present ferrets, Podo and Kodo, are a constant source of entertainment. Only the scenes involving Sharak the Eagle, although well shot, were somewhat bland, and Dar's relationship with this animal was underplayed to say the least, no real bond was shown to exist between them. We as the audience are left to assume that they have been lifelong companions.

All in all Beastmaster II may not become a classic, but as a "watch if there is nothing on TV" it's worth you considering. It's fine as far as good 'ol sword and sorcery/action movies go. Oh, and by the way Best Boy Grip was Dan Colwell, couldn't see a Dolly Grip anywhere in the credits, sorry. ♠



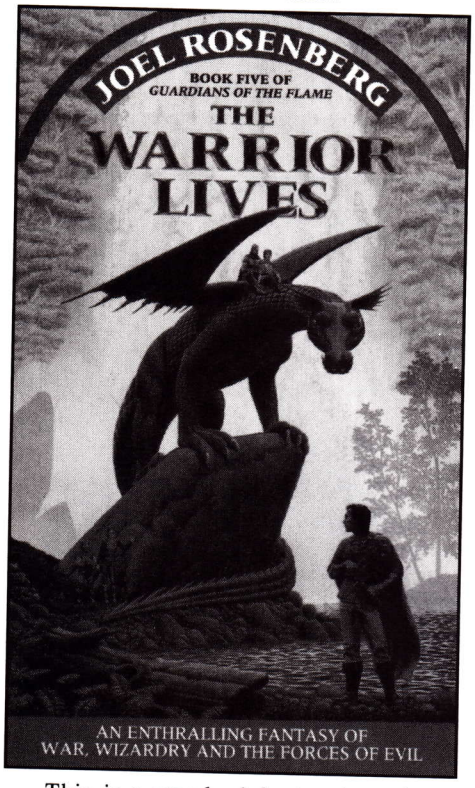
"Humour is something Beastmaster II is not short of and classic one liners aplenty combine with a host of humorous supporting characters ..."

BOOK REVIEWS

first impressions

Martin Tudor's regular feature sees him taking a look at published works authoured by Joe Dever, Anne Gay, Roger MacBride Allen, Terry Pratchett, Joel Rosenberg, Robert Thurston, and Angus Wells.

The Warrior Lives by Joel Rosenberg (Grafton, 'A' format paperback, 270pp, £3.99) is the fifth book in his fantasy series "Guardians of the Flame". Karl Cullinane, warrior, Emperor, champion of the fight against the Slavers' guild and the hero of previous episodes in the series, is dead. But attacks on the slavers continue and messages found on the corpses of the slavers declare that "the warrior lives". The Slavers' Guild are convinced Karl is still alive and are doing their level best to kill him. His son and heir, Jason hopes that the rumours are true and sets out to find his father.



This is a standard fantasy/sword and sorcery adventure, featuring a dwarf, a telepathic dragon, lots of action and no surprises. One of its few saving graces is the almost (but not quite) tongue-in-cheek style in which it is written, very light weight fare.

Even lighter weight, but far more fun, is the final volume in Terry Pratchett's "Nome" trilogy - **Wings** (Corgi, 'A' format paperback, 176pp, £2.99). In the first book of the trilogy, Truckers, we were introduced to the "Nomes" - tiny intelligent creatures who live out of the sight of humanity. Nomes live fast, to them ten years is like a century, so keeping out of sight is not much of a problem - when they want to they can move more quickly than the human eye can register.

In Truckers the thousands of Nomes living beneath the floorboards of the great department store Arnold Bros (est. 1905) discover that the store is about to be demolished. Fortunately some Nomes from the outside world have recently arrived and their reluctant leader Masklin tricks, bullies, and persuades the terrified store Nomes to leave their home. Having escaped the store the Nomes settle in an abandoned quarry. The Nomes from the outside are the guardians of the Thing, which for years they believed to be merely a talisman or a lucky charm, but once in the store, near electricity, it "wakes" up and reveals to Masklin and a few other Nomes the truth of their origin. The Thing, which is apparently a semi-sentient super computer, tells the Nomes that they came from the stars in 'the ship' and that somewhere in the sky the Ship has been waiting for thousands of years to take them home...

Diggers, the second volume, tells how the Nomes defend their quarry against the humans, while Masklin and a few companions try to make their way to Florida to find a way to launch the Thing into space so that it can contact the ship. Wings details the adventures of Masklin and his companions in their search for the Ship.

Despite the fact that the "Nome" trilogy is aimed at the children's market, these books are on a par with the best of Pratchett's Discworld books. They are charming, imaginative and often hilarious and at only £2.99 each they are excellent value for money.

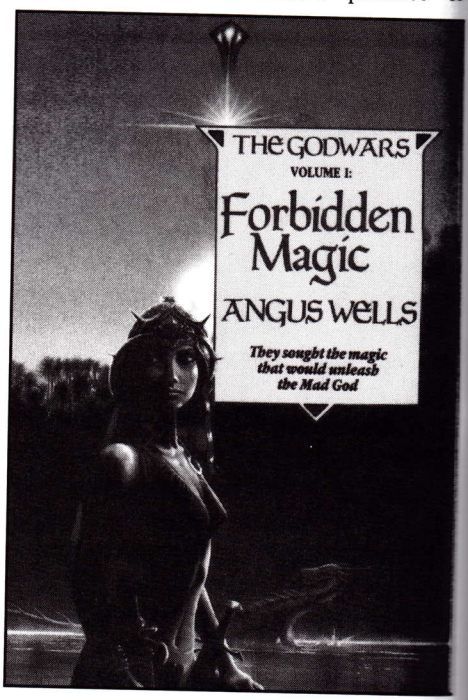
Still in the realms of fantasy is **Forbidden Magic** by Angus Wells (Orbit, 'A' format paperback, 568pp, £4.99) the first volume of the "Godwars" Ttilogy. Wells is an accomplished writer who has transformed what could have been a run-of-the-mill quest story into a gripping novel.

Calandryll, younger son of the Domm of Secca, is a great disappointment to his father - he has little interest in weaponry or hunting, he's quiet and vague and his head is always in either a book or the clouds. So the Domm decides Calandryll will join the priesthood and spend his life in celibacy and ritual, reading only those religious texts permitted to the order. Not surprisingly Calandryll is not too keen on this idea and so when his elder brother becomes betrothed to the girl Calandryll loves he flees his homeland with the help of a visiting ambassador - Varent of Aldarin.

Varent, in return for his help with Calandryll's escape, sends Calandryll on a quest for the Arcanum, a book of magic that holds the key to the resting place of the Mad God Tharn. He tells Calandryll that he must secure the book before it comes into the possession of the insane warlock Azumandias, who intends to raise the Mad God Tharn and end the world.

There are twists galore in the remaining plot, nothing ever being quite what it seems and this, combined with the fast pace and well drawn characters, makes **Forbidden Magic** an excellent read.

In his acknowledgements in The Ring of Charon (Orbit, hardback, 500pp, £14.95) the author, Roger McBride Allen, makes a curious statement: "This book is subtitled 'The first book of the Hunted Earth', and yes, there will be others. But this book, and the next, and all the books that I have ever written or will write *stand alone*. You'll never pick up a book of mine and not be able to understand it without reading 37 other titles. That's a promise." Unfortunately I can't decide whether this is a principled author taking a brave stand against unprincipled publishers who seem to be asserting considerable amounts of pressure on any half-way successful author to give them more of the same, preferably in the form of a trilogy or series, or if Allen's "promise" is

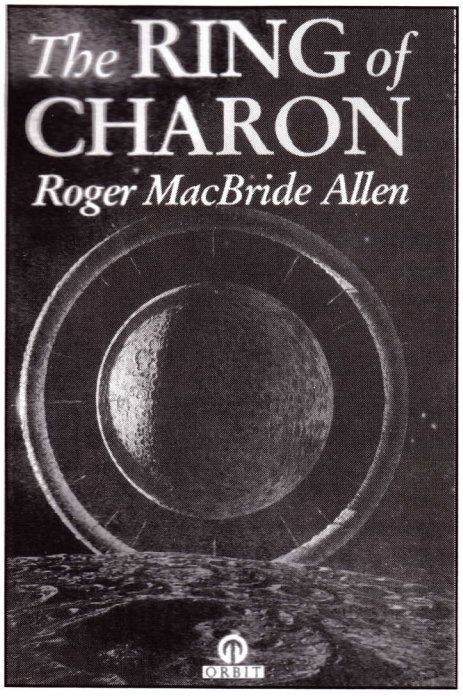


merely a clever way of placating those readers who are sick of trilogies whilst still giving his publishers what *they* want...

Whatever the real reasons behind this curious statement Allen can without doubt tell a good tale. The Ring of Charon is an immense, man-made ring around Pluto's only moon, the largest object ever built by humans and by far the largest particle accelerator made. Unfortunately, although large it is far from being the most efficient - at least as far as the Gravitics Research is concerned (the highest recorded gee-force generated by the ring is two-three gravities for about ten seconds). Then a young researcher, Larry O'Shawnessy Chao, tries a new approach and by focusing and amplifying the existing gravity field he produces a field eleven thousand times more powerful than Earth-normal gravity.

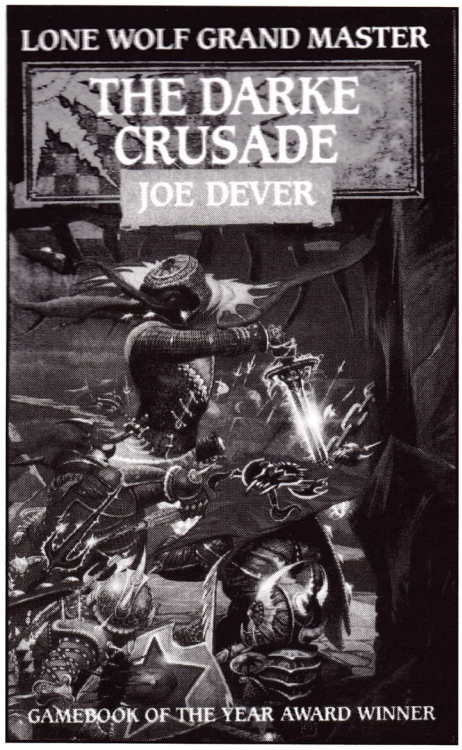
The autocratic director of the station doesn't believe that Larry achieved the results and tries to quash the discovery, but with the help of a colleague Larry organises a demonstration to conclusively prove that his experiment was a success. The demonstration involves sending gravity beams to several other research establishments in the inner solar system, including JPL on Earth. What neither Larry, his colleague, or anybody else realises is that hidden and long dormant in Earth's moon is an entity waiting for a signal - a signal very like Larry's gravity wave demonstration. The demonstration is a success but when the signal reaches the Earth the planet disappears.

This is an exciting and fascinating novel which, although dealing with quite complicated scientific theories, manages to be accessible even to a reader like myself who has no scientific background. Written with style and confidence **The Ring of Charon** is mind-boggling, hard science fiction at its best.



Many of you are probably familiar with Joe Dever and his "Lone Wolf" gamebook series, in which case you'll no doubt be delighted to hear that the fifteenth in the series is now available. In **The Dark Crusade** (Red Fox, random Century, 'A' format paperback, 350pp, £3.99) you, as the warrior known as Lone Wolf, must prevent Warlord Magnaarn, leader of the evil Drakkarim, from finding the Doomstone of Darke. This episode in the Lone Wolf series can, like the previous ones, be played on its own or as part of the whole roleplaying epic.

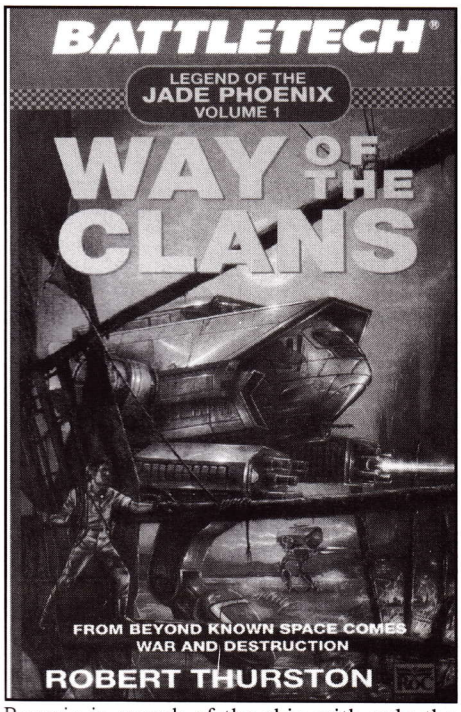
In last month's column I reviewed a couple of books from penguin's ROC imprint. Their latest release is **Way of the Clans** by Robert Thurston (ROC, 'A' format paperback, 248pp, £3.99). This is the first volume in a series entitled "Legend of the Jade Phoenix" set in a universe based on the best selling game from FASA, Battletech. The setting is the 31st century where Battlemechs, the ultimate war machines, and the Clans, the ultimate warriors, rampage through the universe. **Way of the Clans** details the trials and tribulations of Aidan in his attempt to become a warrior of the clan Jade falcon.



Anne Gay's first novel **Mindsail** (Orbit, 'A' format paperback, 378pp, £4.99) is set on the planet Rosaria and tells the story of Tohalla, an apparently barren woman and thus a failure in the community of the Green. It tells of her escape from the Green with her lover, Ain Tsui and his friend Edrach, and their subsequent search for the ship which brought the planet's inhabitants from 'Erth'.

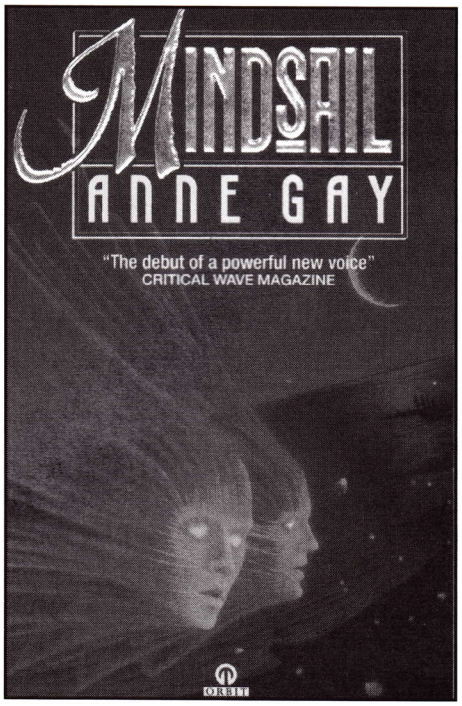
This is a fascinating novel which presents the development of several societies after the crash landing of the ship and the subsequent fragmentation of those societies. In **Mindsail** Gay examines the ways in which the corruption of language can easily obscure knowledge. She has adopted an interesting style of writing to illustrate this point, which although off putting at first is by no means indigestible and serves to emphasise the difficulties faced by the protagonists in making sense of their world.

Large numbers of the descendants of the crew and officers of the ship have developed a nomadic hunter and gatherer society, roaming



Rosaria in search of the ship with only the corrupted logs of the first officers to lead them, these are the True Crew. Those who don't want to continue the search split off into smaller groups known as 'mutinas'. The descendants of the other survivors of the crash have split into two groups. The Greens - who are attempting to destroy the native red plant life of the planet and replace it with the green vegetation of Erth. We are told little of the other society, the iron men, other than the fact that their society is probably the most barbaric and they have retained the knowledge of how to work with metal.

Although there are many questions left unresolved at the end of this novel, it is on the whole a mature, powerful and fascinating work, written with far more verve and confidence than one would normally expect from a new talent. I hope to review Gay's second novel The Brooch of Azure Midnight (Orbit, hardback, 455pp, £13.95) next month. ♠



STYX & STONES

Once again the letters roll in, but many of you still harp on about old debates, lets have something new please. Sorry about the rather long winded reply to Mr. Coombs' letter but some things cannot go unsaid

Dear Gamesman,

I'm not in the habit of writing to magazines but felt compelled to on this occasion. Having just picked up, and read, a copy of Gamesman #3, I couldn't believe anyone would have had the nerve to publish such a sub standard periodical. What the hell do you take us for? You cover nothing "in depth"; all your features seem to be written by your own staff and you're missing so much that should be covered in a 'so called' general Games magazine. Why was so much space given over to play-by mail and live roleplaying? I was under the, mistaken, impression that your magazine was aimed at an older, more mature market, so why all this juvenile junk? Is there any chance that one day, Gamesman will cover intelligent games instead of outlets for spotty teenagers with puberty problems.

Yours Sincerely

David Coombs, Exeter.

Oh dear! Are we supposed to defend ourselves at this point, against the ramblings of someone that quite obviously hasn't even tried PBM or LRP? If you had any connection with these areas of the hobby then you would see that many of those involved are far from being 'spotty teenagers with puberty problems'. LRP has been up and running in this country for over ten years now and is in many ways no different from historical re-enactment; would you also say that this was juvenile? LRP companies offer a service that gives many people, not just spotty teenagers, hours of enjoyable and harmless fun and has resurrected many old crafts, as well as encouraging research into many historical periods. The paintballing aspect of LRP is also very popular with many companies who use it as part of their management training courses, with a view to encouraging teamwork and initiative amongst their personnel. Play-by Mail games have been around far longer than LRP and are played worldwide by millions of people, from manual workers to bank managers. It offers a wide selection of games from serious historical simulations to games that are purely for fun and allows people from many parts of the country, indeed the world, to share in games that they might otherwise be denied. Amongst the games that are played by post, chess ranks highly and was probably one of the first to be played in such a way, but of course Mr. Coombs this is only a 'juvenile' game after all, so juvenile in fact that it has survived as a game for centuries.

Of course the first few issues of Gamesman have seen many features written by us, however, if you look at this issue you will see that far less has been done our staff. This is because it has taken the first few issues to build up our review panel and a decent list of contributors; saying this, though, it is also impossible for many things to be put together out of house and you will have to bear with us on this. As to your suggestion that we do not cover anything in depth... from issue to issue some areas of gaming will be covered more than others allowing you to build up a better picture of the games industry as a whole, while still catering to your specialist needs. Unfortunately your letter seems to be indicative of the closed minded attitude of some gameplayers today, an attitude that places them firmly in one games ghetto or another, showing that they are unwilling and, therefore, unable, to see that there are many different games out there in the 'big wide world' that may be deserving of their attention.

Finally, what exactly are we missing in Gamesman? You failed to suggest anything in your letter; could it be that you do not know yourself? We are always willing to accept constructive criticism and act upon it, however, if you do not qualify your statement, what are we supposed to do? Right from issue one's editorial we have said that we are here to serve our readers, but we can only do so if they tell us what they want. Your letter says a lot about yourself as a closed minded individual, and little about us, LRP or PBM that is of any value. I suggest that you write in and tell us exactly what it is that you don't like and suggest some alternatives, then we may well be able to act.

Dear Sir,

With reference to the letter printed in issue three of your magazine from one P.B. Shelley. Firstly, I believe that this name was made up for the sole purpose of having a letter printed in your magazine and secondly, my girlfriend does a much better impression of an alien than his.

Yours Faithfully,

Franklin D. Roosevelt (Jnr.)

Right, matter closed. No more funny business, from now on we get serious.

Don't be such an old grouch, if they want to be silly let them. I'll give a prize to the person who writes the most amusing letter - [Associate Editor].

To Whom it may concern,

I would like to point out an error in your review of Space Crusade.

In the paragraph on page 37, "a couple of niggles..." your reviewer mentions a weapon called a "Devastator".

I must point out that a devastator is a specialist grade of marine, one trained in the use of heavy or specialist weapons e.g. missile launchers, assault cannons or flamers and is not a weapon at all.

I hope this clears Mr. Birkill's problems and enhances his enjoyment of his play sessions. I also play Spacehulk and Warhammer 40K, this is where my information on devastators comes from

James Carter, Lancs.

Sorry James but if a game refers to something, especially on one of its playing cards then it should be explained properly. You know about it because you play WH40K and Spacehulk, someone buying the Space Crusade game may not have access to this information. However anyone with the game, in the light of the info that you have provided, can take the word to signify the use of heavy weapons. Thanks.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please, Please, Please can you send me some information on the game Aliens by Leading Edge and Marvel Superheroes by TSR, thank you.

Zane Jensen, Essex.

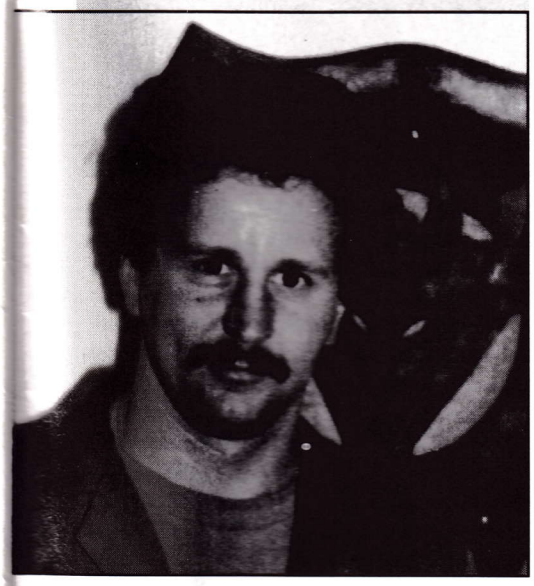
We will of course forward the information to you, but for anyone else that is interested here goes. Marvel Superheroes, produced by TSR allows you to play many of your favourits comic book heroes, Dare Devil, Captain America, The X-Men, Fantastic Four etc., that is if you do not want to design your own. It is supported by many scenarios and sourcebooks and the system is highly recommended by many people, it retails at around £9.50 and can be obtained from most game shops. If you are interested in the Superhero genre I would also suggest that you try DC Heroes, produced by Mayfair, retailing at £17.99 and covering the DC comics universe.

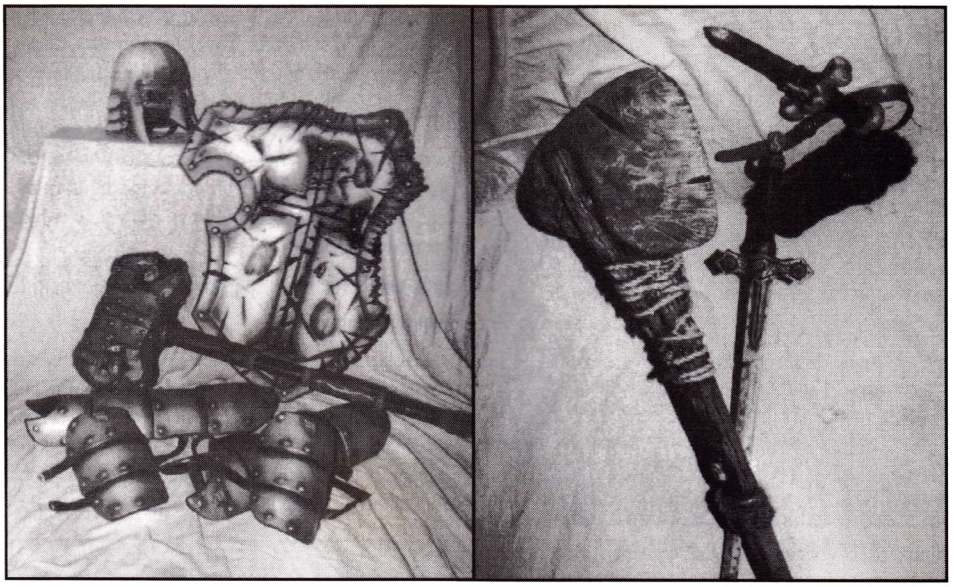
Aliens, from Leading Edge, is available as an RPG, The Aliens Adventure Game at £19.99, the game has a very 'Outland' feel to it, you get too play Colonial marines, corp execs, businessmen, explorers etc. Contains stills from Aliens II, from footage never seen at the cinema. Also available is Aliens, this time it's war! A battle simulation containing a 33" x 17" full colour map, 47 colour stand up counters and 19 character cards, marines in stand up battles with the alien menace, costs £19.99. ♠

INDUSTRY

The Weaponsmith

Live Role Playing has many companies serving its players, producing weapons, armour and equipment. This month we take a look at one of these companies, *The Weaponsmith*, and talk to Alan Bates about his own business and the industry in general.





How did you start and why?

"Well it started off as just a weekend hobby, in Burnley. A few of the lads got together and got a system together so I went over one weekend and had a look. I watched and thought, this looks interesting so I said; 'Can I have a go?' 'Yes, by all means', they said, so I set out using these 'Gaffa' tape weapons and I thought, I'll have a go at making one of these.

So I made a couple of 'Gaffa' tape weapons and then a shield; this was over at **Alternative Reality** who set up a suppliers as well as an indoor roleplaying site...

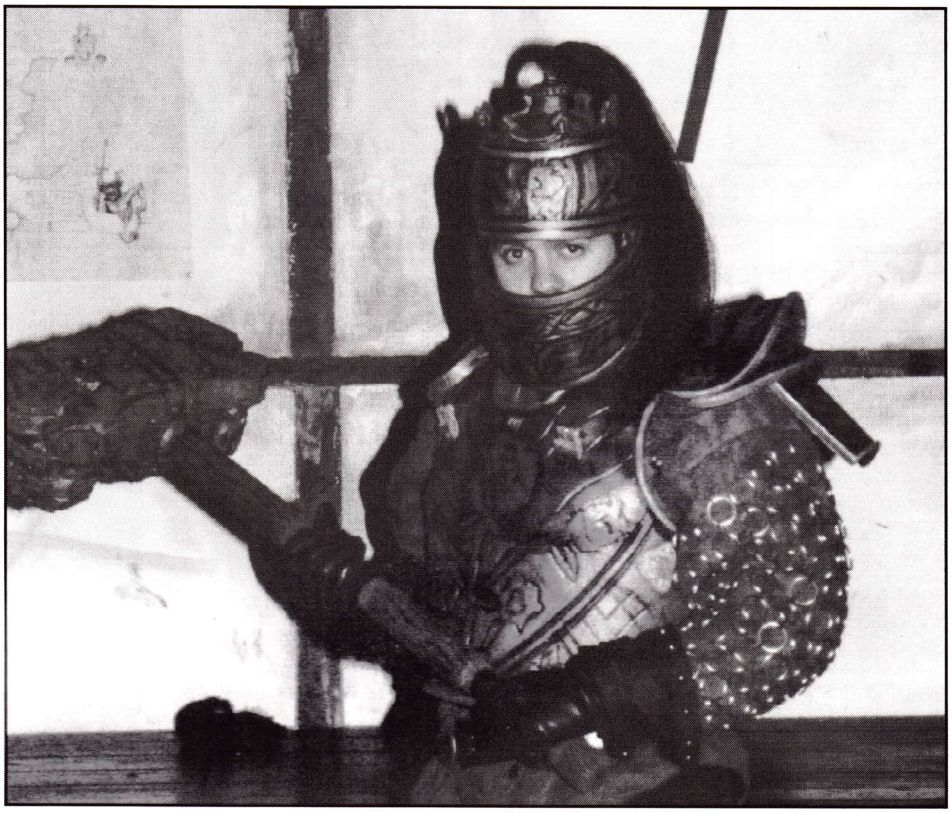
We thought about getting a site together... and in the mean time went over to **Trouble at Mill** in Wakefield and took over these 'Gaffa' tape weapons with us. There was a guy there called Max, from **Second Skin**, and he showed us some of his stuff and they were a bit better than ours. I had a word with him and he told me how he did it. So I sent some money off to various places and got some samples sent back and I put a little dagger together, then some swords and some other bits and pieces and people thought they were Ok and said can you make us one. It started with one or two then three or four then five or six and I thought, 'this is beginning to get a bit out of hand'; I was spending most of my weekends making weapons. It was really getting out of hand and about twelve months ago I actually thought about making them full time.

I thought a lot about it though, would I be secure if I did it; I was about to get married and at that time the place I was working at was merging with another company...they were making everybody redundant so I got back from my honey-moon, set myself up and went down to *Summerfest* last year. I went round handing out information and people said 'Yes, will you quote me for this, and will you quote me for that', and I had quite a few orders before I had actually set up. I went to the enterprise allowance. It took a while to get it on the way, but I set up officially on the 26th November last year, which was a milestone for me. I'd never done anything like this before...It was a case of making it work. I've thrown myself into it and am making it work and it's getting very popular at the moment.

How do you see the market at the moment?

"There's a lot of competition, but you've got to be better - new products, new ranges, better designs, and hopefully people will come back to you. At the moment most people I send stuff to tend to come back. Up to now I haven't had any complaints - nobody's sent anything back! Just things sent back for repair because of constant use - not through faults of mine, through wear and tear - I just fix them up, latex them again, airbrush them, and send them back out.

The market's there and there's enough people out there to satisfy, but I class myself as one of the better (that's what I've been told) manufacturers in terms of quality. So I aim for the higher range market, for people who actually want something made to order, something they've drawn up. A lot of it's personal taste - some people prefer my stuff, some **Second Skin's**, some **Forge of Lein**. So it's not a case of me having a standard range of weapons or armour, nothing like that; it's a case of what people want I will make for them; they'll get back



almost exactly what they want, or better. So I don't have a catalogue with a range of designs in and that's the only range that I make - that's what a lot of companies do - I'm catering for people who want something different."

What exactly do you concentrate on producing?

"I can produce virtually anything - I've not turned anybody down. The only things I'm not doing at the moment are arrows and bows; the market's there but it takes a long time to develop. I can make them but I'm trying to make sure they're safe. This is something under discussion with Paladin, we're trying to get standards for arrows and bows put together, and until that time we're trying to find out what sort of equipment we can put together."

We've printed the Second Skin Guidelines on safe arrows for LRP (see issue #3), so tell us what do you think of them?

Yeah, they were one of the first to start developing them, and printing guidelines, and we're trying to work to these. There's quite a lot of objection to arrows being used in roleplaying at all because a bow, no matter what you do with it, is still a weapon. Latex weapons and armour are not classed as real weapons but a bow, no matter what you do with it, is still considered a lethal weapon.

Do you offer any sort of guarantee on your weapons?

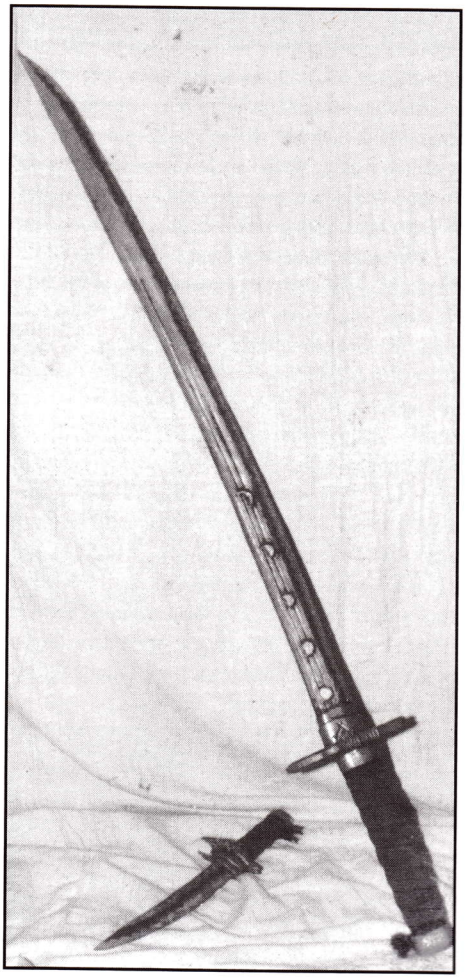
Not as such, but most people who guarantee weapons for a set period, well it's not really a guarantee. As long as you use it right then it's guaranteed. A lot of people will say " I will guarantee my weapons", but if you give that guarantee to someone that will abuse it you will have the weapon back the next day. I feel you can't guarantee a weapon because of what it's used for. You can always say as long as it's used sensibly, to a certain degree, then you'll get months and months of wear and tear out of it. I can understand why people want a guarantee, but if someone is going to abuse something you've put a lot of effort into... You tend to find out, especially if someone goes from place to place and works their way through people.

Do you do anything apart from weapons and armour, for instance costumes?

I make my own costumes. If people specifically ask for something then yes, I can make it. I can make most things, but I tend to stick more to what I'm good at. I can make masks but I'm not offering that as a service, not yet anyway. I'm thinking of taking on an assistant - the orders are there, it's a case of getting the baby out of the way, getting everything settled, and getting somebody in to help me. I do have friends who come in and help me some of the time, just giving me more time, which I'm grateful for.

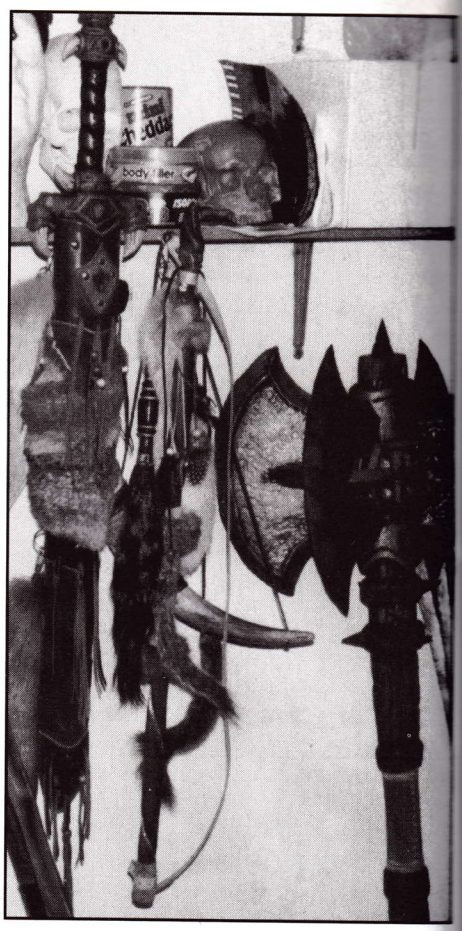
Have you ever had any particularly memorable orders or customers?

Well practically everything I make is unique. A few people send in designs with no intention of getting them made, just curiosity I suppose. I do have weapons that glow - just green and gold at the moment, but I'm working on other colours. It tends to add about fifteen pounds for a blade.



Over the past few years we have seen many developments in LRP such as the move from 'Gaffa' tape to latex. Where do you see it going in the future?

At the moment I think we will be sticking with latex, at least until someone can come up with something better. But it's got to be as durable as foam or latex; foam has the rigidity and latex binds it together and protects it, and you can get a good finish. I'm not sure where it's going to go, because there's a lot of foam/ latex at the moment, it's a good medium for a lot of detail. It's got to the stage where if you want something mass produced, you've got to mould it, cast it and inject the foam latex, but if you start doing that everybody's stuff will look the same. It's a case of adapting things you've already got to other things...At the moment a lot of people are



going for more and more realism, and think 'Oh, a sword that looks like a sword', not something 'fantasy' overinflated. They want something that's functional. A lot of systems are changing, some are very fantasy orientated, while some are very realistic with knights, crusaders and Christian types, it's all historically correct, so you need to make a sword that is also historically correct.

If you are interested in the **Weaponsmith's** work and require further information then contact **Alan Bates** at **The Weaponsmith** 148, Chapel Street, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 8EH. or Telephone. (0282) 611144.

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LEISURE

Chris and Evelyn Coombs (mother and daughter) set-up *Cat & Mouse* over three years ago and since its inception have had murdered well over 300 people. They're not the biggest mass murderers since Ted Bundy, they run a company that puts on murder mystery evenings and weekends for private parties and at hotels all over the country. Gamesman recently visited the Hoggs Back Hotel in Guildford, to investigate. Geoff Pass, Michael Grainger, myself and my good lady went as a party. The following is exactly what happened. Not even the names have been changed to protect the innocent.

I should have known from the start that it was a mistake. A quiet dinner, Alistair said. This kind of thing had happened before, but I chose to believe him, because I wanted to. For once I thought it really would be just the two of us. To be fair though, I think even Alistair was shocked by the way things turned out. He knew there was some pretty shady dealing going on, but even he didn't suspect murder.

My husband's a journalist - I think a kind of would-be Peter Parker, if only the truth were known. Consequently our so-called "quiet dinners" quite often turned out to be uneasy little squats in dingy restaurants with me acting as 'cover' for Alistair's camera. Imagine my surprise, then, when he took my green velvet cocktail dress out of the closet and started fussing over his best suit. If the worst came to the worst, I thought happily, at least I'd be acting as cover in a smart place for once!

When we arrived, however, my heart sank a little to see two of Alistair's closest cronies: Michael, also a journalist, and Geoff, private detective and mystery writer extraordinaire (!). Not for the first time, I thought how disreputable the three of them looked together, and yearned for the comfortable old days when 'a quiet dinner' meant candles and wine and soft music, rather than whispering over a pie and chips. I stared absently across the room while Geoff hurriedly explained about missing diamonds and clandestine meetings; I'd heard it all before, and was really only interested in whether there were any normal people left in the world. A tall, distinguished-looking man caught my eye. I smiled, and he began to walk over to us. Things are looking up, I thought; then he introduced himself, saying he was a police officer and did we know anything about Van Der Marle, who was apparently a dangerous criminal. Silently detaching myself from my party, I wandered over to a table where a smiling waitress was pouring out Bucks Fizz, wondering if my husband would ever tire of mixing himself up in crime, and trying not to be curious about why we were there that evening.

Suddenly I felt a hand on my arm, and looked round to see a charming Dutchman in a flying jacket.

"Why are you alone?" he asked teasingly. "A lovely woman should never stand alone."

I laughed. Well, I knew he was stringing me a line, but it was more amusing to me than stolen diamonds. He was extremely amusing and flattering, and I was beginning to enjoy myself when we were interrupted by a strange lady.

"Excuse me, Ms. Powers? Have you got your credit cards back?"

I stared at her, somewhat bemused.

"I think there must be some mistake," I began.

"Aren't you Ms. Powers?" she insisted; "I felt sure you must be..."

She backed away, still looking at me suspiciously, and Alistair started producing all sorts of letters that he'd got hold of from somewhere, about a girl called Tracy, who was apparently a kleptomaniac.

"Poor girl," I said, rather losing patience, but it only seemed to irritate him.

"That's her," he insisted, pointing out a rather loud young lady across the room

"Well, perhaps you should inform the manager," I said, "and for heaven's sake, keep an eye on your wallet."

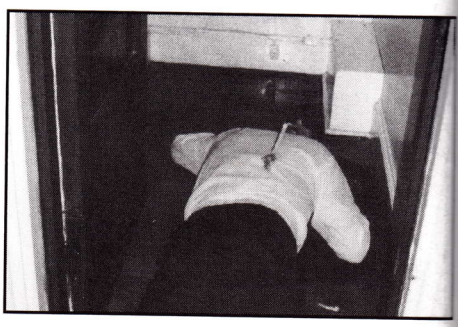
I sighed rather heavily, and looked around for the Dutchman, who really seemed to be the only sane person here. Fortunately for me, as I thought then, he came over quite soon, and began to relate how he had flown over from Holland himself, in a light plane, but had mistaken the neighbouring field for the landing strip at the local airfield. I spoke to him for a little while longer, but all too quickly we were ushered into the dining room, and I was once more plunged into the realms of Sexton Blake / 007. What puzzled me was that they all seemed terribly angry about my conversation with the Dutchman, and after a rather confusing argument, it turned out that they had wanted me to talk to him at greater length and in more depth. Hardly terribly flattering, I thought, but they assured me that my smiling friend was none other than Van Der Marle, the notorious jewel thief.

"How ridiculous," I began, becoming a little annoyed at what I still believed to be a silly game. "You'll get someone into real trouble one of these days with your..."

Before I could finish, I was interrupted by the policeman who had spoken to us earlier. He stood at the far end of the room, microphone in hand.

"I'm sorry to interrupt your dinners, but I should just like to run a little test, if you would all be so kind as to bear with me for just a moment. As some of you already know, I am a police officer, and I have an extremely good reason for making this request. I am about to hand out pieces of card. I should like you all to write your names at the top of the card, and underneath, the word 'continental'. If you would then care to write down as many other words as you can make out of the letters of this word, I should be very grateful."

Simple enough word game, I thought. At least it might divert the suspicious minds of my companions. No such luck, however. Although they all obediently wrote down 'continental', and Mike even made some effort to produce a pretty impressive list of words which might be made from it, one by one they wandered into the foyer 'to have a snoop around. 'Something suspicious' was going on, and they were going to 'find out what it was and stop it happening'. Or at least get some good pictures for the paper, I thought cynically.



Well, I was just thinking how possibly this was all getting rather out of hand when a commotion began at the Dutchman's table. There was a tall, dark-haired woman sitting with him, and it seemed that her handbag had been stolen. She began shouting that the girl, Tracy, had taken it, and indeed, after what Alistair had said, I could well believe it. Quite a little fight developed, and a man called Willy began to defend Tracy. Finally, one of the many people walking past the table noticed the bag lying on the floor, and things began to quieten down. Suddenly Alistair appeared from nowhere, terribly excited, but looking as pale as a sheet.

"The policeman!" he began, somewhat incoherently. "He's been stabbed!"

"What a headline," I began dryly, not inclined to take him seriously. "While you've been rushing about, you've missed all the action. That woman had her handbag stolen."

"Oh, they weren't in there," he returned impatiently. "I'd already checked."

I was so scandalised at the thought of him searching a strange woman's handbag that it took me a minute to take in the rest of his comment.

"What weren't in there?" I asked, momentarily inquisitive. "And more to the point, what were you doing searching her handbag?"

"For God's sake, *forget* her handbag. I tell you, the policeman's been murdered!:"

I cannot describe to you how I felt then, in that moment when I realised that he was serious, that this was no game, that somewhere in the hotel, a man lay dead, a man with whom we had spoken only hours before. I felt weak and sickened, and could not concentrate as Alistair and Geoff compared notes on whom they had seen near the body. Soon I became aware of another voice speaking - a woman stood with a microphone at the far end of the room, telling a remarkably familiar tale of stolen diamonds. It seemed that she was a private investigator, and had been following a woman named Marianne in connection with the jewels; I found it extremely difficult to take in, but I noticed that, as the Dutchman entered the room, she glanced sharply in his direction, and continued to watch him as he returned to his place at the table. I remember thinking that it was strange that his lady friend seemed to have disappeared. Suddenly the woman too seemed to notice it, for her voice grew urgent, and she appealed to the crowded dining room for their assistance in locating her.

"Ladies and gentleman, I am beginning to be somewhat concerned for Marianne. Van Der Marle, where is your friend?"

I could feel the panic rising as she spoke, as Van Der Marle protested ignorance, swearing he had never met her before that evening. Everything felt out of control, as though I had slipped into some nightmare land of Alistair's making.

"Let me look for her. I'm sure I can find her."

The voice seemed to come from miles away, yet I was standing, walking to the door, and it was I that had spoken, I who must find her and thereby squash the terrible fear that rose within me. I walked unsteadily to the door, fumbling in my handbag for my cigarettes.

Everything from then on becomes a little confused in my memory, as the normal world receded and the nightmare took over. I remember stepping into the lobby and, looking around, choosing a door at random through which to search for Marianne. I remember opening the door, and looking in, seeing, as though lit by a lightening flash, the sprawled body, the dark hair wet and sticky, the bottle flung down by her side, and then the velvet night closing in as I dropped by her side. Pulling myself together, I stood and turned to the door, just as a young man came in.

"I've found her. It's her. She's dead, I think."

I pushed past him and ran back to the hall.

"I've found her!" I screamed. "I've found her. She's dead."

Then there were people, masses of people, or so it seemed to me. People, all talking, pushing, laughing even. I was pushed back to the room, and, in a daze, I felt for my handbag - an automatic reaction left over from normality - only to find it open. Numbly, unthinkingly, I went through the contents: cigarettes, lighter, purse, cheque book, credit cards - my lipstick was gone. Suddenly in the wash of faces a woman appeared.

"I've found something! Do you think it's a clue?"

"That's mine," I cried. "That's mine. It's just my lipstick; nothing important."

Her face dropped, but she handed it over. I went into the toilets and made myself up with a shaking hand. All I wanted was to go home, to walk out and find that it was all my tormented imagination, strung up with champagne and foolish talk. I stood for some minutes, glad of the quiet, trying not to think what might be happening outside, gradually growing calmer.

As I entered the dining room, I became aware of people eyeing me suspiciously, but since I was looking askance at everything I saw, I paid little attention to this. In fact, it was only ten minutes later, when Alistair and his friends joined me at the table, that I realised what was going on.

"There's been another death," Geoff said excitedly.

"I know. I found the body. Didn't you know?" Somehow, the sarcasm came easily.

"Not *that* death. Another one. That Dutch bloke. Been found dead in a bowl of strawberries."

"Very funny.

"No, seriously, he was shot. Found with a bullet through his heart."

This time I really fainted. When I came round, I headed straight for the toilets, and secretly decided to stay there until the whole frightening affair was finished. However, as I left the dining room, I realised that there were two women behind me, who followed me into the Ladies and watched me every second. When I left, they left too, and followed me back to the table.

"Excuse me, do you mind showing me your handbag?"

Stunned, I complied, and they rummaged around while Michael looked on excitedly, notebook in hand. I could see the headlines forming in his mind. **JOURNALIST'S WIFE HELD ON MURDER CHARGE - HANDBAG MAJOR EXHIBIT**. I have to say, it didn't improve my peace of mind any.

"Why have you swapped handbags?" the woman demanded peremptorily.

"I'm sorry?"

"You had a black bag earlier. Why did you switch? What did you give Van Der Marle?"

"I'm very sorry," I replied, still too shocked to be indignant. "You've made a mistake. That's the only bag I've had all evening."

She retired, unconvinced, and I turned to Alistair.

"What in hell's name is going on?"

He grinned.

"Look's like you're suspect Number 1."

A woman at the next table lent over to me.

"Who were you meeting at half-past nine?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Just how friendly were you with Van Der Marle, dear?"

Just then the private investigator spoke again.

"It seems that this is growing out of hand. We now have not one, but three, murders on our hands. We must find the diamonds, which seem to be the root of all this trouble, and perhaps with them, we will find the killer. If anyone has any idea about these murders, please speak. Who killed the police officer? Who killed Marianne? Who killed Van Der Marle? And finally, *where are the diamonds?*"

So to explain. Van der Marle smuggled diamonds into the country in his light plane. Unfortunately, on this trip his plane landed in the wrong field and was spotted by the police. The detective sergeant was there acting on information received about the plane, in an attempt to find Van der Marle. Willy (a small time crook) had come to the hotel with Tracy, the kleptomaniac, in the hope of making an easy killing. Tracy knew someone (Marianne) who could put them on to the diamonds. Marianne was with Van der Marle since she was his contact in this country. So who murdered whom? Van der Marle stabbed the policeman because he knew he was about to be rumbled. The policeman had, in fact, found a note that Marianne had carelessly droped. Marianne had been killed by Van der Marle after he discovered that the detective (Jennifer Jones) had a record of diamond smuggling and that she was about to expose Marianne. Van der Marle couldn't afford to have Marianne squeel, so he bashed her brains out in the cloakroom with a wine bottle. This left only Willy, Tracy and Van der Marle lelt. The PI and her assistant being above suspicion. When (shock horror!) Van der Marle was found shot dead we were a bit stumped. What had happened, in fact, was that Willy had killed Van der Marle in an attempt to obtain the diamonds. Having searched him and finding no diamonds we were well flummoxed. They were actually in Van der Marle's pen!!

The whole evening was very enjoyable, the meal and service being excellent. The characters were played by actors and actresses who put a huge amount of effort into the evening. Considering there were over 80 people the number of those who got involved is amazing and is due wholly to the professionalism of the cast. The number of red herrings was staggering. A bloodstained hanky (in fact lipstick), a man's boot print on a towel and, of course, Juliet's lipstick were all mentioned in the answer sheets that we filled in after all the killing. Geoff, from out party, got very close to the solution, and received a bottle of bubbly. The winner, Mary Sears, was almost exact (God knows how). We spent the rest of the evening getting blotto with a bunch from Sony UK who had come along to the murder evening as their first company outing. This sort of do is perfect for companies and **Cat & Mouse** are happy to arrange events just for them. If you'd like **Cat & Mouse** to organise something for you, or if you just want further information, then Chris Coombs will be happy to talk. You can contact her at: Splatt Cottage, Broadwood Kelly, Nr. Winkleigh, EX19 8EQ, or on 0837 83076. ♠

SCENARIO

OPERATION NORCOMM or ASTA LA VISTA BABY

A Star Wars scenario for 2-6 inexperienced rebels by Tom Hutchinson.

Introduction

CH Exc 1026 Entry 04850: AMORPHOUS OUTER HYDROCARBON PLANETS

In many solar systems, the outer planets are composed almost exclusively of the hydrocarbon methane, representing a valuable and untapped mineral resource.

Recently, the technologists Norcomm, in conjunction with The Empire have devised a way to 'mine' these planets - the 1A9 installation. The 1A9 is completely self-sufficient, and although it has a crew of 20, it has been found that it can operate (albeit with a reduction in efficiency) with only 5 people. Also, due to the advanced recycling system of the 1A9, it can operate for up to 7 years before new supplies are needed.

Physically the 1A9 unit is a large cylinder, which is implanted into the frozen methane of the planet/planetoid. Mine shafts are then bored off from this cylinder by remote controlled drones and the methane obtained processed by the latest equipment. The 1A9 is now mining on fifteen different planets, and is fully 23.20% more efficient than the next best form of hydrocarbon recovery.
Entry from Internet's "Practical Mining" database.

Players Introduction

The rebels asked you to and so you accepted. What a dumb idea. They wanted you to "take and if possible, hold" in the immortal words of the briefing officer, the planet known as Asta. It's supposed to have a small mine on it, and since the rebels are always short of everything, capturing it would not be a bad idea. They give you a freighter that shudders through hyperspace and some neat electronic warfare stuff which means that Asta won't be able to send for help. And you still think it's a dumb idea now.

You've just popped out of Hyperspace and Asta, an iceball, millions of miles away from its sun, glimmers prettily beneath you. It doesn't know what's going to hit it yet.

Thankfully you've got it all worked out - you whiz down while half of the miners (only twenty of these) are messing around on some sort of geological analysis garbage outside the mine, then get in, hold the mine up, and keep your hands on it until the rebels tell you otherwise.

If you intend to play in this adventure, you should read no further. Everything else is for the GM's visual receptors only.

GM's Introduction

On the planet which is known to most as an irrelevant number, 000021M/1A9, and to its tiny population of Asta, an 1A9 unit has been mining precious methane for three years. Now it mines no longer.

Although these frozen outer planets appear inconspicuous and dull, they are considerably older than mankind. Below the surface of a precious few are things unknown to humanity. It would benefit humanity if it stayed well clear of those planets. Asta is one of those planets. Beneath the ice is a frozen bacterial hive mind, which would have remained undisturbed for centuries, had the 1A9 not mined right into it.

The players become involved when they are told by the rebel alliance to take and hold the 1A9 and Asta. This will lead them into a confrontation with the hive mind, ripening maybe to full scale defiance of the Empire once they find out that they are no longer running Asta. It would be useful if at least one PC had decent pilot skills, as gooey things will happen to most of the NPCs.

GM Information

The Hive Mind

The hive mind beneath the ice of Asta is made up of bacteria. The bacteria serves to infect sentient beings, which can then relay sensory mind back to the main mass of bacteria, or The Whole, as it is in its own language. In turn, The Whole commands the infected beings to infect more beings, and so on, ad infinitum. The Whole is incredibly evil, and is allied to the dark side of The Force. Bad News.

Fortunately (?!) it is rather easy to pick out humans who have succumbed to the bacteria. After an incubation period of 1D x 1D hours, when the bacteria has no control over its host, things start to get messy. As The Whole fights for command, the body structure degenerates until after 10 minutes it is entirely fluid. After these hours The Whole will be in complete control over its literally liquefied host.

The host will resemble a shuddering heap of bones, flesh and muscle. These degenerated humans are able to move, talk, think and attack, much like Lovecraft's shoggoths, only a whole lot more sick. They can also operate quite normally outside of the 1A9 unit without need of any sort of environmental suit. Note that you can still kill one by explosive decompression, or other pressure FX. In rare instances they are able to resist The Whole for a while, but the GM should only allow this when it is "Dramatically Appropriate", whenever that should be.

There are two ways in which a human may become infected with the bacteria; The Whole can use its Control Another's Disease Force ability (Control + Alter) or the live bacteria can get into the blood. Control Another's Disease is fine, but there is very little chance of it working. The Whole only managed to infect one person but then they infected others, who then infected others, and so on until most of the base got infected. Note that the live bacteria must infect the bloodstream. Outside The Whole, or a host (degenerate or not), they become dormant in 1d6 segments. If a degenerated host causes at least a

Wound with its engulf and squash attack, then have a victim make an additional strength check with a difficulty number of 10 for a Wound result, 15 for an Incapacitation and 20 for a Mortal Wound.

The bacteria can still infect dead bodies - there is also no incubation period and the degeneration can start right away. A degenerated host that was once dead is just as good as one that was alive, if not better, since there is no possibility of those irritating relapses when The Whole loses control. Droids and aliens cannot be infected so The Whole will direct most of its physical might (Degenerated hosts, mainly) against them.

Statistics for The Whole and Hosts:

The Whole

The Whole is entirely composed of bacteria and as such can make no physical attack. Only massive damage (i.e. blowing the planet to pieces) will suffice to destroy The Whole. However, The Whole, being allied to the dark side, does possess a Control skill of 5D and an Alter of 4D + 1.

Degenerated Hosts.

Dex:3D **Percep: 3D**
Str 4D **Move Code: 4D**
Combat: The hosts rely on engulfing and crushing their victims. This has a difficulty number of 10 and does damage as Strength. They have no ranged attacks.

The 1A9 Mine And Personnel

For a physical description of the mine, see the opening paragraphs. The key to the map is below.

1 Anti-meteor Turbo-laser. (vehicle) damage 8D, accuracy 1D
2 Landing Pad
3 Flight Control
4 Sensor Operation
5 Lift
6 Guardroom
7 Airlock
8 Decontamination Room
9 Medical Centre
10 Lift
11 Mess
12 Mine Co-ordination Office
13 Recreation
14 Lavatorium
15 Lift
16 Workshop
17 Sleeping Quarters
18 Sleeping Quarters
19 Lift
20 Computer Room
21 Recycling Access
22 Lift
23 Brig
24 Lift
25 Decontamination Room
26 Mine
27 Vehicle Bay

There is no map of the mine shafts, since they are so huge and expansive, but if the players go down there you can use the mine out of the rulebook as a geomorph, obviously removing any bits solely applicable to that scenario.

In general, a generous amount of equipment is available - blasters, spacesuits, as well as other technical widgets - and both the rebels and the "native resistance" should be allowed access to it.

The crew consists of twenty people. Three of these have realised that they have sympathies towards the rebels and have indulged in a bit of sabotage. This brought big trouble. The Empire sent along an agent with orders to kill any "traitors" he found. He's still on the base and will probably be the biggest problem, excepting The Whole, for the PC's.

The proto rebels will probably try and join up with the PC's if they are well treated as POWs - this would involve, for one, pointing out the imperial agent Alcarz - but would, needless to say, soon revert back to imperial tendencies if treated very badly.

Alcarz, the agent, when the rebels attack, will take command and organise the crew into an effective resistance. His strategies for doing this are discussed below, along with those of The Whole. The statistics, quirks, positions when the rebels attack, and hours remaining before degeneration for the entire crew are below.

"Gizmo" Gax, Stairwell Krop and Amk Creon.

These are the recyc. and miscellaneous technicians. Stairwell is a rebel sympathiser. Amk has an unusually squeaky voice. Stairwell is on duty in area 21 when the rebels attack, Amk is in area 10 and Gax is asleep in area 17. Gax, Stairwell and Amk have 8,9,and 10 hours left respectively before degeneration respectively.

Mech: 4D Repulsorlift Op.:5D
Tech: 4D Recycle Rep: 6D
Repulsorlift Rep: 5D Droid Prog/Rep: 4D+1
All skills and attributes not listed are at 2D.

Crad Yaibs, Zoonquarn Yx

They are computer operators, but a better phrase would be wireheads. If it ain't semi conductors then they can't get on with it. Zoonquarn has been making amorous advances towards the medical droid. It doesn't matter, since he's only got two hours before degeneration. Yaibs will hang on for another 20 hours. Zoonquarn is in area 9 (surprise, surprise) and Yaibs is in area 20.

Tech: 4D Computer Prog/Rep: 6D
Droid Prog/Rep: 6D

Geentech Too-Onebee.

A medical droid. This slightly older version of the well-known model is another rebel sympathiser and is bored stiff with Zoonquarn trying to make advances. Its only problem is that Alcarz, the agent, has wired a bomb up to it, as he has worked out what it's up to. He hopes to detonate this bomb when the droid is attending a rebel meeting. Too-Onebee doesn't know about this yet. Too-Onebee will be in area nine being bored by Zoonquarn when the rebels attack. Too-Onebee is programmed never to take human life or to perform an action which would endanger such. These commands are absolute and incontrovertible.

Regarding the infection, Too-Onebee is on the verge of discovering it, and will definitely work out what is happening if it can get samples from a degenerated host. Skills:

Medicine 9D Alien Races 5D
Equipped with: Diagnostic and analytical computers and various surgical attachments.

Captain Alcarz

An agent dedicated to the purging of the rebel scum. He models himself on Lord Vader, thinking him to be (not counting The Emperor of course) the greatest human ever to have lived. He is physically gifted, giving him a sense skill of 1D. He is not consciously aware of this. He can be found in area 12 and is not infected.

Dex: 3D
Mech: 2D + 1
Blaster 4D
Dodge 5D
Percep: 4D
Technical: 2D + 1
Command: 6D
Hide/Sneak 5D
Str: 3D
Know: 3D
Brawling: 4D
Technology: 5D
Sense: 1D

Equipment: Heavy Blast Pistol, Protective Helmet & Vest (adds 2 pips to strength code for damage purposes only. Does not reduce dexterity code & skills), 4 hot (blocks IR) smoke grenades, 1 Thermal Detonator, Knife.

The Ghent Brothers

Miners. Ghent junior is a rebel sympathiser and uninfected. His brother (Ghent senior) has already degenerated and is globbing around in the ducts. Ghent junior is down the mines in one of the two giant methane cutting machines (area 26)

Mechanical 4D
Technical: 4D
Repulsorlift Op. 6D
Repulsorlift Repair 5D + 2

Grazil Brunner

Commander of the base. She's been trying to get rid of Alcarz, who she regards as an annoying snoop, and to this end she would really like to find the rebel sympathisers first. With only nine hours before degeneration, she's unlikely to accomplish this. She can be found off-duty in area 11 when the PCs attack.

Dexterity 3D
Perception 4D
Blaster 4D
Dodge 4D
Command 5D
Gambling 5D + 2
Knowledge 2D
Strength 3D
Bureaucracy 3D
Mechanical 3D
Technical 3D
Starship Piloting 5D

Equipment: Blaster Pistol, Pocket Computer, Headache pills.

The Ten Others On Geological Analysis

Don't bother about them. The analysis is a round trip of 10 hours, by which time half of the analysts will have degenerated and squelched the other half. Inflict them on the players later on, if The Whole is in need of reinforcements.

The Whole

Once The Whole has enough degenerated hosts, it will launch a major attack on the PCs, using ducts, underfloor recesses and the mines to its advantage (don't forget: degenerated hosts don't need air, pressure, or heat - they can survive unprotected on the planet's surface). The aim of this attack will be to take both areas 20 and 21.

If it takes area 20 then it will use the computer to train the anti-meteor turbolaser onto the PCs' ship and disable it, achieving two things. Firstly, the PCs will not be able to leave, and secondly, the jammer will be deactivated, thus bringing along lots of new potential hosts when The Empire hears the distress signal that is put out.

If it takes area 21 it will destroy the environmental systems (Repair Difficulty Number 30), meaning that a life-supporting atmosphere can only be sustained for 5 hours. If it manages to take both areas 20 and 21 then clearly the PCs are in trouble: they are advised to take 20 back if they would like to escape intact. However, things will be complicated still more by...

Alcarz's Tactics

Alcarz would also like to take the computer room (20), as from here anyone can set the fusion reactor into a supercritical state, which will create a chain reaction capable of destroying the planet (and The Whole) completely. There is a lapse of 30 minutes between telling the reactor to self-destruct and the actual planet-busting explosion this action will entail (along with lots of flashing lights and blaring sirens warning that "you have 24 minutes to get off-planet"), although five minutes or less before the explosion, the destruction sequence is irreversible.

In this 30 minutes Alcarz will hopefully take control of the PC's ship, if it hasn't been blasted , and get off-planet. To be honest, the chance of him accomplishing this is small, but if he makes it there are always escape capsules. You needn't let the players know about these until the last few minutes and even then you can still mess them about pretty well. Although there are several escape capsules (all of which are capable of Hyperspace) you only need make one immediately obvious and give this one a limited capacity - like one less than the number of PCs. Go on. Get your own back.

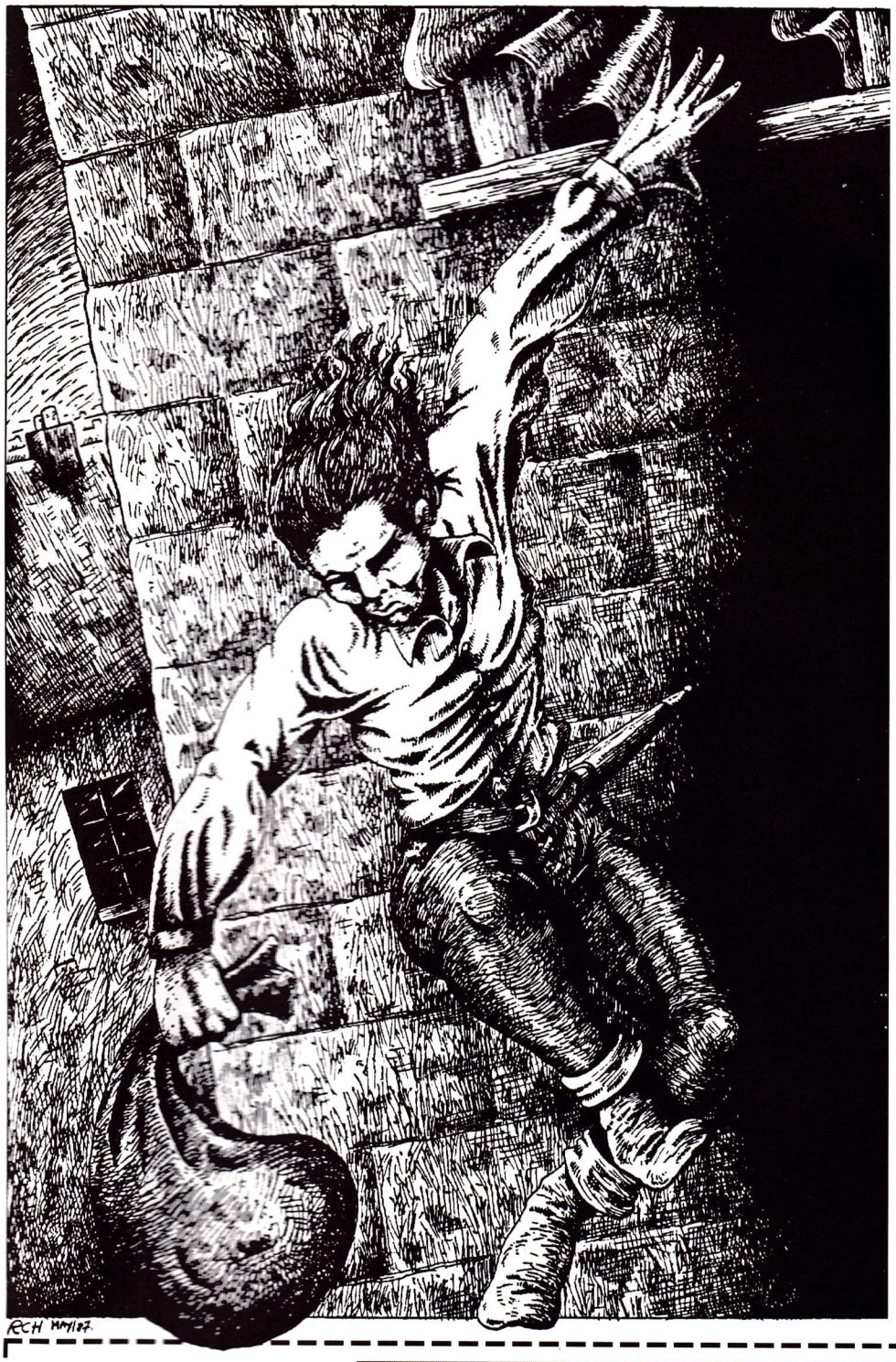
PC Equipment

The PCs are given the following equipment: Small Hyperspace Transport (capacity 10 if pushed, no weapons or shields, hull 4D, sublight speed 3D), Spacesuits (maintains environment for 6 hours), Blaster Pistols, if they don't have them already. And the jammer. This massive piece of equipment (so large it can only be carried in the transport - if it's punted another 5 people can be squeezed in) prevents all communications devices within a 10 kilometre radius from working. Note that as well as stopping the 1A9 sending for help, it also knocks out commlinks. If the ship takes any damage at all, the jammer will cease to function. It's very fragile.

Notes

The likely conclusion of the adventure is that The Whole gets destroyed, along with most of the planet. The players should be capable of setting off the destruct sequence (a use of Force Points would not be frowned upon), but stopping it may be a little more difficult. The hours until degeneration should be ignored if the plot demands it - just start The Attack of The Blobs.

Playtesters were: Joel "Blamm Blamm Blamm..... Blammmmm" Matthews, Jamie Cochran, Ben "Roll over twenty with a d6" Matthews and Viscount Von "Squelching Hell" Krappon. ♠



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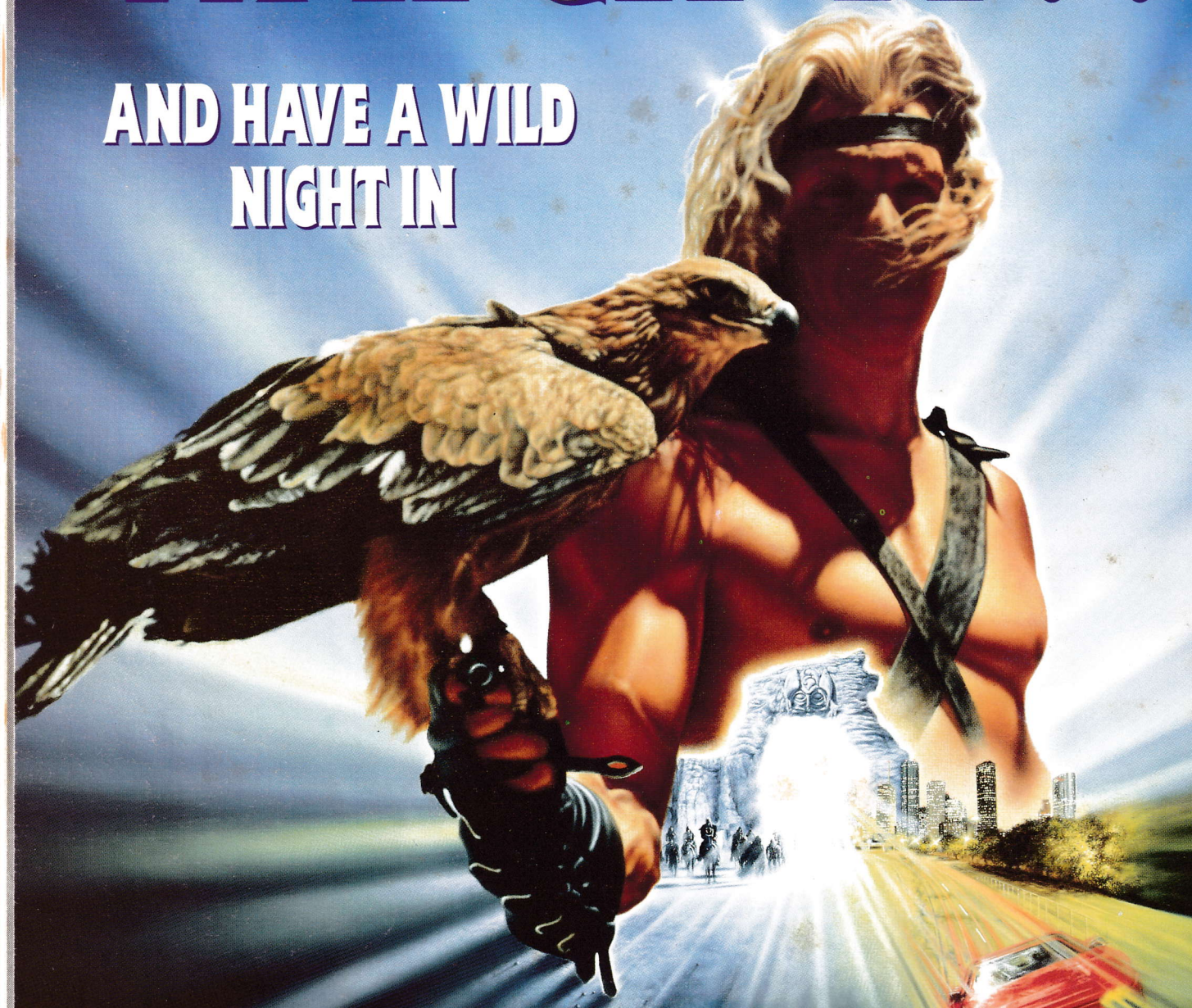

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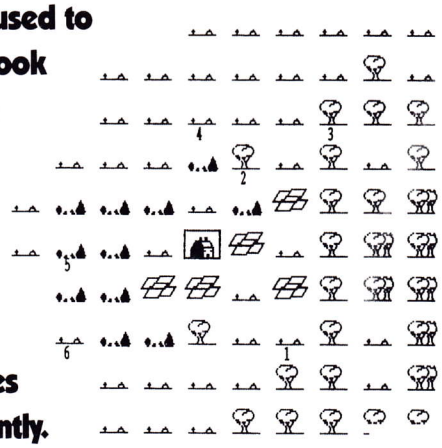

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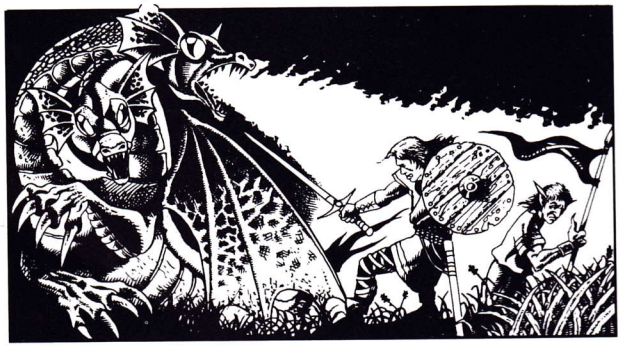

** Read all about Quest inside this months Gamesman **